

Sermon Notes: The Marks of an Established Church

Text: James 5:13–20 (NKJV) — *13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. 19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*

Review: *See back*

Take Away: *To be an established church, ready for the trials and sufferings ahead, we must not forget the basics of practical Christianity within the community of believers: prayer and singing, confession and forgiveness, and loving church discipline. This is where our hope in Christ is renewed when we are experiencing buffeting and bruising from trials.*

I. Mark #1 — A Community of Prayer: *(References: James 4:2b, 3; James 1:6; Romans 12:12; Isaiah 42:3-4; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:6-7; James 5:11; James 1:2-4; 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18; Psalm 42:5; Psalm 22:21-26; Mark 6:12-13; Mark 2:9)*

II. Mark #2 — A Community of Forgiveness: *(References: Proverbs 17:9; 1st Corinthians 6:7; Matthew 18:15-17; Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 4:25; 1 Peter 3:7)*

III. Mark #3 — A Community of the Truth: *(References: 1 John 2:19; 1 Corinthians 5:4; Hebrews 13:17)*

Review of James 5:1-12

1. James changed his focus at the beginning of chapter 5 by turning his attention to the wicked _____ in Jerusalem. In doing so, James takes the role of an OT prophet to denounce the leaders of their grievous sins. This is an apocalypse—an unveiling—in two ways. First James encourages his sheep that God has not forgotten them in their suffering at the hands of these leaders. God, like a general putting on his uniform, is getting ready for war because he has heard their cries. These rich elite have exploited them and _____ them by holding back their wages through fraud. They have used this ill-gotten gain to fatten themselves with luxuries, gold and silver. But, these things will not save them when God comes to judge the city in A. D. 70. Their wealth will leave them and will stand as a corrosive witness against them. They top their mountain of crimes by continuing the stiff-necked tradition of the elite of Jerusalem in the past—they kill the _____ God has sent them. These leaders have killed John the Baptist, Stephen, and of course Christ Himself—the Just One. They will also kill James the Just before their destruction comes.
2. The second part of this unveiling is an assessment of Christ's Church. When Christ shakes the nations, He in His providence and mercy shakes His _____ as well. He does this to see if they are established in the faith. Have they built on sand or the Rock? James' concern is that when Christ comes in judgement over Jerusalem, He may find a church _____. They may be tempted to take vengeance for themselves against the wicked elite. They may be persuaded to the path of zealotry and violence. Or, maybe they are tempted to grumble in sin against their neighbor. Whatever the case, James wants his people to be _____ in faith by perseverance. They are to look to Job as an example of how to suffer patiently.
3. Lastly, they ought to resist the sin of _____ and be faithful at the smallest level. They should let their "yes" be "yes" and their "no" be "no". They should not let anger (rash oathmaking) or fear (rash oathbreaking) lead them to be wish-washy. When the pressure is turned up, the Christian Church should be found established in their _____, in the self-control of meekness. For Christ was not wish-washy or doubleminded when He set His face like flint to the cross. Nothing could cause Him to veer one way or the other.

Questions for the Table:

1. Take account of your prayer life. Are you living in such a way that your prayers would not be hindered?
2. Take account of your prayer life. Do you genuinely believe that God is a good Father who gives good gifts to His children? Or, do you pray with fatalistic indifference? If the latter, is there a moment when your prayers trended towards that indifference?
3. Luther said: "*Anyone who is to find Christ must first find the Church.*" Why is the local, in person, gathering on the Lord's Day essential to the Christian life? How should you see your role as part of the KCC body?
4. Take an account of your ability to reconcile with others in the body. Are you a keeper of short accounts? Are you one who, when found in sin, confesses quickly, fully, with no blame shifting and excuses? Are you one who is quick to forgive? How can you grow in these areas?
5. Are you good at covering the minor offenses you receive in love? Or do you get wound up by the little things?
6. What is the purpose of excommunication? Why is it necessary for a healthy, hopefilled church?