LIFE GROUP LESSON

THE BOOK OF JAMES - FAITH WORKS - WEEK OF NOV. 15

Goal: to understand that fearing the Lord means loving the Lord and serving him joyfully and wholeheartedly. We part with idols and choose instead to honor his holy name by worshiping regularly and inviting at least five persons each month to join us in worship, praying for the unchurched, learning through Life Groups, serving others in the name of Christ, and being generous through tithing, gifts, and second-mile offerings.

Introduction

In this message series, we have learned James tells it like it is. He is a prophet and a practical theologian; he does not mince words; he is not out to win approval. In chapter five, James addresses rich people who have built their hopes on wealth while exploiting the laborers who work their fields. He warns them by reminding them their gold and silver is worthless in light of eternity. In fact, he says, the "treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment." James is aware of workers who have been cheated of their pay, their hard-earned wages being deliberately withheld. He comes down hard on the rich whose hearts allowed their greed to become an idol.

James is not condemning wealth and possessions but condemning what wealth can do to us when we make it our ultimate security. Thus, the question is: does your wealth possess you? Are we storing up treasures on earth, maybe without even realizing it, or are you storing up treasure in heaven? Jesus said, "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be" (Matthew 6:19-21; see also Jesus' words to the rich man in Mark 10:21).

Read James 5:1-6

Our six-fold covenant at Christ Church is a commitment to worshiping regularly, inviting our friends, and coworkers/colleagues to join in worship, praying for the unchurched, serving in an area of ministry, learning through Life Groups, and tithing. James gives a warning to the wealthy. And the best way to fight greed is by practicing generosity through tithing.

Discussion:

- What have you learned about tithing? (share your story)
- What does Malachi 3:10-12 say about tithing and God's promise to bless?

When everything was stripped away from Job, he said: "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The LORD gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!" (Job 1:21).

- Why is it important to remember that we will not take any of our wealth/possessions with us when we leave this earth?
- James speaks of 'hearing the cries of those who harvest your fields … that their cries have reached the ears of the Lord' (James 5:4). What does Deuteronomy 24:14-15 and Leviticus 19:13 say about paying our workers?

Read James 5:7-12

- Practice patience in the waiting. Sometimes the Lord does not answer our prayers in the way or timing we may prefer. Yet, we press forward, believing and trusting he will hear and answer according to HIS will and in His time. Why is it important in the interim (the waiting) to continue to worship regularly and serve faithfully?
- Let your yes be yes. Jesus says, "Just say a simple Yes, I will or No, I won't. Anything beyond this is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37).Why does the Lord want us to be a person of our word?
- How has learning (what it means to follow Jesus) through Life Groups been impactful in your life?

Read James 5:13-20

James writes this letter only fifteen to twenty years after Pentecost, when "all the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals … and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). Yet, by this point, many had been scattered. And just as it was difficult for the people of Israel to remain connected and wholeheartedly devoted once they entered the land and 'scattered' to the portion of land allotted to their tribe, early believers needed to be grounded (centered) in truth. God's word is truth … like bedrock, it is solid and unchanging.This is why we must pray according to God's Word. The way to know to pray according to God's Word is by reading and studying the Bible everyday (i.e. devoting ourselves to the apostles' teaching).

- Remember what James said about hearing versus doing – “But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves” (James 1:22). Why is naming your sin and confessing it to another person vital?
- What have you learned about the power of prayer … praying for the unchurched … praying for physical, emotional and spiritual healing?

Read together

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results” (James 5:16).

- James says, “My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins” (James 5:19-20). How does inviting people to find their way back to God bring about ‘the forgiveness of many sins’?

In Closing

Read together the words of Joshua:

“So fear the LORD and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD alone. But if you refuse to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve.Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:14-15).

One Year Bible Readings

Nov. 15: Ezekiel 31:1-32:32, Hebrews 12:14-29, Ps. 113:1-114:8, Prov. 27:18-20
Nov. 16: Ezekiel 33:1-34:31, Hebrews 13:1-25, Psalm 115:1-18, Prov. 27:21-22
Nov. 17: Ezekiel 35:1-36:38, James 1:1-18, Psalm 116:1-19, Prov. 27:23-27
Nov. 18: Ezekiel 37:1-38:23, James 1:19-2:17, Psalm 117:1-2, Prov. 28:1
Nov. 19: Ezekiel 39:1-40:27, James 2:18-3:18, Psalm 118:1-18, Prov. 28:2
Nov. 20: Ezekiel 40:28-41:26, James 4:1-17, Psalm 118:19-29, Prov. 28:3-5
Nov. 21: Ezekiel 42:1-43:27, James 5:1-20, Psalm 119:1-16, Prov. 28:6-7

THE BOOK OF JAMES

faith WORKS

Text: James 5

Plain Truth:

Faith works by committing ourselves to worshipping, _____, serving, _____, praying and _____.

1. Warning to the _____ - practice _____ through _____..
2. Patience in the _____- practice _____ and _____.
3. Let your _____ be _____- _____ what it means to follow Jesus through _____ _____.
4. The power of _____ - pray for _____, for physical, emotional and spiritual _____.
5. _____ people to _____ their _____ back to God.

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