



April 10, **17**, 24 2018

SESSION TWO

JAMES: EPISTLE OF STRAW OR THE STRAW THAT STIRS THE DRINK?

"In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that it is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to the others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it." Preface to the New Testament, 1522 Martin Luther (later removed by Luther from subsequent editions)

READINGS AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION Tuesday April 17

Topic: Taming the Tongue

Reading: James 1:19-21, 26 James 3:1-12 James 5:12 Proverbs 10:19,13:3, 29:20

Questions:

- What are the benefits of being focused on listening and slower to speak and express anger? What are the costs of reversing the focus?
- What words might James have about the quality of public discourse today? How hopeful are you that it can be changed? What is the Church's role?
- In 5:12, James implies that we should be known as people who honor their words and promises without needing to offer oaths. Write this verse in your own words.
- Why do you imagine James focuses mostly on the destructive power of words and our inability to "bridle our tongues"? What are positive ways we can use our words? When are there times that we "bridle" our tongues when it would be better to not hold back?

Topic: Double-mindedness

Reading: James 1:5-8 James 3:13-18 James 4:1-10

Questions:

- How would you explain what James means by “double-mindedness”? Read Matthew 6:24
- Is doubt ever healthy when it comes to faith? Why or why not? How or how not?
- What are the effects of envy and selfish ambition on relationships and community? How do you distinguish between healthy and selfish ambition?
- Describe in your own words what you think James means by linking “friend of the world” and “enemy of God”. How could this contrast be misunderstood and misapplied?
- When you pray “thy will be done” in the Lord’s Prayer, are you praying in generalities and globally, or do you consider that you are praying that God’s Will would be done by you?
- Who are the “wise” people in your life? What leads you to say that about them?

Topic: Suffering and Temptation

Reading: James 1:2-4, 12-18, 27 James 5:7-11

Questions:

- What attitude does James encourage during troubled times and difficulty? How can that be? How is that not living in denial? What do you believe James means?
- From where do temptations come?
- What can you do to stop an evil or sinful desire from becoming an evil or sinful act?
- Have you ever suffered as a consequence of being a person of faith?
- Can you think of any good that has come out of a particularly difficult or painful time in your life?
- How can one discern between when patience is a virtue and when it is harmful?