



April 10, 17, **24** 2018

SESSION THREE

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 24

Topic: Partiality Reading: James 2:1-13 James 4:11-12

Questions:

- In what ways have you experienced the consequences of partiality or favoritism or prejudice? In what ways do you see yourself falling into these behaviors?
- As a society, what attributes are typically rewarded with favoritism?
- How do/could churches exhibit favoritism or partiality?
- Write 2:13 in your own words.
- What does 4:11-12 have to do with partiality?

Topic: Wealth/ Poverty Reading: James 1:9-11,27 James 2:1-7 James 4:13-17 James 5:1-6

Questions:

- How have you seen money change people? How can you see one's attitude towards money affecting relationships with each other and/or God?
- Read I Timothy 6:10. What does that verse add to our understanding of what James is saying?
- In 4:13-17, James seems to imply that planning for the future is or could be arrogance. Is that true? Why or why not? What is his point?
- In his *The Message* paraphrase of 5:1-6, Eugene Peterson rewords it to read "*And a final word to you arrogant rich: Take some lessons in lament. You'll need buckets for the tears when the crash comes upon you. Your money is corrupt and your fine clothes stink. Your greedy luxuries are a cancer in your gut, destroying your life from within. You thought you were piling up wealth. What you've piled up is judgment.⁴⁶ All the workers you've exploited and cheated cry out for judgment. The groans of the workers you used and abused are a roar in the ears of the Master Avenger. You've looted the earth and lived it up. But all you'll have to show for it is a fatter than usual corpse. In fact, what you've done is condemn and murder perfectly good persons, who stand there and take it.*" What is different in this from your version? Why does that matter?

Topic: Life in Christian Community

Reading: James 1: 27 James 5: 13-20

Questions:

- What does James lift up as attributes of a faith community in 5:13-20?
- What is the difference between religion and faith? How do they relate to each other?
- Why is it important to confess our sins in the presence of another?
- What is our responsibility towards a person who has wandered from faith? Have you ever had such a person in your life who either you reached out towards or who reached out to you? Share that story.