

August 30, 2020
Willerup United Methodist Church
Sermon Notes
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The Book of James, Lesson 8
Evaluate Yourself

This is the eighth in our series of meditations based on the book of James for the month of July and August. James was written by the brother of our Lord Jesus, who called himself a servant of God and Jesus Christ. It was primarily written to Jewish Christians who were scattered in many nations. James talks in this book about practical religion: trials and tribulations, how to apply the Word of God in our daily life, the worldliness in the church and Christian perspective.

James 4:11-17

Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹²There is only one Law-giver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor?

¹³Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

EVALUATE YOURSELF

James is challenging the Christians to judge themselves before judging others. Let God be the judge because He alone is entitled to do so. He deals with

criticism and boasting among the Christians and give us godly advice to evaluate oneself only.

A. Criticism – Vs. 11-12

Criticism:

“The expression of disapproval of someone or something based on perceived faults or mistakes.” *Cambridge Dictionary*

“The act of criticizing usually unfavorably.” *Merriam Webster Dictionary*

1. Do not judge, or you too will be judged. (Matthew 7:1)

Criticism is a hobby and pastime to some people. Finding faults in others is their specialty. Some people are not willing to see the other side of the people. This is the reason God and man are different. “Man sees outwardly but God sees the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

2. Criticism can be exercised rightly about *things* – an animal, a picture, a statue. Sometimes it is our duty to criticize the activities of individuals and to comment sternly on evil things.

3. But we cannot criticize persons to damage their reputation. We may envy and be jealous about their actions etc. but we have no right to judge.

4. Slander – critical language – is sin of speech.

Let us see it in the Scripture and the results of it.

The people who were led by Moses became impatient and, “they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food.’”

The Lord judged them and “sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.” (Numbers 21:4-6)

“Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.” (Psalm 101:5)

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the

pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” (1 Peter 2:11-12)

“Keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” (1 Peter 3:16)

The Christian perspective is to “LOOK WITHIN.” Who are we before God? Jesus said, regarding correction or criticizing, “Take out the log from your eye before you take the speck from other’s eyes.” (Matthew 7:5)

David says, “Search me, O God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

We cannot sit on the judgment seat which rightly belongs to God alone. Speak not evil or backbite.

“They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.” (Romans 1:29-31)

“For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.” (2 Corinthians 12:20)

B. Boasting – Vs. 13-16

Boast:

“to praise oneself extravagantly in speech,” *Dictionary.com*

“to speak with exaggeration and excessive pride, especially about oneself,”
Merriam Webster

“The term as indicating the character of the man who lays claim to what will bring credit, when the claim is altogether false or grossly exaggerated.”

Aristotle

Self-confidence was the life plan of the Rich Fool. (Luke 12:13-21)
Human life's achievement is seen as a human contribution which displays consciousness of power, a noble and well-informed plan.

James is questioning the self-confident businesspersons:

Where they are going?

How long they will be staying?

What they will do?

Outcome of their visit?

God's word is saying to the Rich Fool and here in this context:

What is life?

You do not know about tomorrow.

Look at what Covid-19 is doing to the people of this world.

We as a family planned for three years to have my daughter and her family to visit us from India this past summer. The passports were renewed, the visas were applied and stamped, the travel agents were approached, the money was arranged, the travel in the US was planned. But in one go everything was canceled.

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church planned a session to be held in May 2020 at Minneapolis, Minnesota. Covid postponed it to August 2021. All the plans failed, and God set us do ministry through Covid.

No one can predict life.

“Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.” (Job 7:7)

“You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath.” (Psalm 39:5)

“For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers.” (Psalm 102:3)

“Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow.” (Psalm 144:4)

“You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning – though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered. (Psalm 90:5-6)

The Rich fool in Luke 12 boasted, “This is what I will do, I will tear down my barns and build new ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’” (verses 18-20)

James writes, put your plans before God. He questions, who is in the driving seat, you or God?
Goals are good but if we leave God out then it will be a complete disaster.

We talk about our plan for this year, one year, five years and ten years.
If God steps in and rearranges my plan, what will be my reaction?

Delay is not denial.

WAIT on God. Wait patiently.

“But as he (Paul) left, he promised, ‘I will come back if it is God’s will.’” Acts 18:21

“As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” (James 4:16-17)

C. Action – Vs. 17

Do it-

If you do not do what is right, it is not acceptable to God.

“The servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.” (Luke 12:47)

“Jesus said, ‘If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.’” (John 9:41)

“It would have better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.” (2 Peter 2:21)

Study notes and help is taken from:

Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary of the Bible*. pg. 1160

Adam Clarke's, *Commentary on the Bible* pg. 1296

Ryrie's New Testament; study on James

The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary pg. 594