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Willerup United Methodist Church
Sermon Notes
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The Book of James, Lesson 9
Money Matters



This is the ninth in our series of meditations based on the book of James. 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 5:1-6

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. ²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

Money Matters

Money is not the root of all evil but the lust for money is the root of all evil.
How do you use your money?
How did you earn your money?
The Lord says that we should lay our treasures in heaven where there is no theft, moth-eating or rusting.

James is cautioning people that wealth is temporary but judgment is eternal. If by pursuing wealth lead to neglect of pursuing God or to trust wealth as a solution to your deepest need, we are in trouble.

Riches should be used to honor God and help the poor. The principle of covetousness causes the lust of money and greed to keep it all to ourselves.

Reasons why the rich will suffer:

1. Hoarding of wealth and failure to use it to help the poor (vs 2-3)

Corroding and moths indicate that it did not either help them or others. Jesus gave this suggestion for rich people:

Luke 12:33-34 “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Jesus gave another example of a rich fool in in this chapter, Luke 12:13-21. The rich man was counting on his possessions and achievements for his life. Jesus taught about the brevity of life and also that our life is not dependent on possessions but on our relationship with the eternal God.

Another rich man wanted to follow the Lord and the Lord instructed him too. Luke 18:22 “... ‘*Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me.*’

When he heard this, he became very sad because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked at him and said, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’”

In ancient times the city had a one big gate and side doors. The main gate was closed at a certain time but the side door which was small kept open. A

camel can bend, humble and pass through the door but for a rich man to bend or humble himself is difficult.

Zacchaeus took the counsel of the Lord when he invited Jesus to his home. Luke 19:8 ***“But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this home because this man too is a son of Abraham.’”***

2. The rich had opportunities but did not act

The Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-21

He has plenty to spend and have lavish social gatherings every day.

At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

Both died and went to two places where a great chasm separated them.

The Word says to the rich man (vs 25), ***“ ... In your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted and you are in agony.”***

Luke 6:24-26 – Why did Jesus bless the poor but condemn the rich?

“But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.”

“... From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded...”

(Luke 12:48). That is the balance of the judge, He puts in his balance all our possessions, words, deeds etc. and then judges us. He provides us with opportunities to use our gifts, talents and possessions to help people in need. Why did Jesus have more good things to say about the Good Samaritan and less about the Levites and Priests? When the opportunity came the good Samaritan took it and helped the person in need.

3. The rich failed to pay their laborers what was owed to them

There were clear instructions in the Word for them

Leviticus 19:13, *“Do not defraud your neighbor or rob them. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.”*

Deuteronomy 24:14-15, *“Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. Pay him wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin.”*

Malachi 3:5, *“So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me,’ says the Lord Almighty.”*

4. The rich used the influence of their social and political connections and condemned and murdered innocent men.

Amos 2:6-7, *“This is what the Lord says: ‘For three sins of Israel even four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed ...’*

Amos 5:12, *“For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts.”*

Micah 2:2, 6-9, *“They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance ... ‘Do not prophesy,’ their prophets say. ‘Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us.’ Should it be said, O house of Jacob: ‘Is the Spirit of the Lord angry? Does he do such things?’ Do not my words do good to him whose ways are upright? Lately my people have risen up like*

an enemy. You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without a care, like men returning from battle. You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children forever.”

Abraham was a rich man but he always honored God with his substance and brought tithes to the King of Salem, Melchizedek. Salem means peace, making him ‘the King of Peace’ and Melchizedek means ‘the king of Righteousness,’ the type of Christ. Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 7:1-3

Job was rich but godly. He was tested by the loss of his possessions and proved himself that his love for the Lord is greater than anything else. His famous statement and confession of faith is,
“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”
Job 1:21

Are we rich in mercy, grace and compassion?

5. The church at Laodicea - a rich church. Revelation 3:17-18

Jesus talked to them and disciplined them because He loved them:
“You say ‘I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.”

Life Application Bible notes on these verses:

Laodicea was known for its great wealth - but Christ told the Laodiceans to buy their gold from him (real spiritual treasures). The city was proud of its cloth and dyeing industries - but Christ told them to purchase white clothes from him (his righteousness). Laodicea prided itself on its precious eye salve that healed many eye problems - but Christ told them to get medicine from him to heal their eyes so they could see the truth (John 9:39). Christ was showing the Laodiceans that

true value was not in material possessions, but in a right relationship with God.

This was the church where Jesus was standing and knocking at the door to allow him to come in and have fellowship with them. Revelation 3:20

Acts 3:1-9, Peter and John were going to pray and saw a beggar, who was expecting some help from them (probably monetary). The disciples bluntly said,

vs. 6-8, “ ... ***Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.***” ***Taking him by the right hand, helped him up, and instantly man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk ...***”

So, let us become rich in mercy and compassion and share the greatest treasure we have the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Let people open the door of their hearts as he is waiting and knocking it.

Let us invite him, Come Lord Jesus, because he alone is the source of all blessings on this earth. He commissioned his disciples:

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

Matthew 28:18-20.