

# James

June 25, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled "James." Thank you to Earl, Dave, Mike, and Dawn for being involved in the video. The scripture reading is James 4, 1 to 6. Happy anniversary this week to Len and Dorothy, and happy birthday to John.

## Welcome, Prayer, Announcements

Good morning everyone. I wish to welcome everyone, especially if you're visiting with us. We want you to feel at home. We'll begin this morning with a few announcements. Anniversaries this week. Tina and Earl. I saw Earl practicing. How many years, Earl? 34. One Earl to another Earl. Most unusual conversation in the English language. Earl to Earl. In terms of prayer requests, we just want you to remember that the students, although not with us, are writing their exams this week and then graduation ceremony on Friday. And of course, many traveling all over the world, so think of them. I do have a card here from Pam, and she just says, "I want to say thank you and ask the Lord to shower you with his blessings." And in her words, she says, "I would like to express my utmost gratitude to my church family for prayers and financial support. I am truly blessed, Pam." So we appreciate Pam and her service amongst us and many things she does behind the scenes, including grocery shopping for my in-laws, etc., etc. So she does a lot of things amongst us, so we appreciate her. As we begin our worship this morning, let's go to God in prayer.

Our Father, we thank you for the opportunity of being here this morning as your children. We pray that you will help us to put aside the cares and concerns of our daily lives and focus on you and your goodness towards us. We pray, Father, that you will help us as we meet around the table and as Don brings us a message that we may be drawn closer to you and closer to each other for our shared experience this morning. We pray, Father, that you would watch over us and our families, guard and bless those who are absent from us, whether it be because of sickness or travel. And we pray that you will help us to find comfort and peace in your will this morning. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Communion

There are two terms that have been forth in my mind through the last couple months. And they're actually in the book that we'll be studying this morning for our brother Don. It's enduring and hardship. There's a passage in James that says, you know, don't be surprised when you endure such hardships because that's the testing of your faith. And so keep enduring. Now, when that was written, hardship and enduring meant two different, way different things, I'm sure, to the first century Christians who were being under threat of their very lives for taking on Jesus as their Lord and Master. Now, today we'll say, we'll see enduring and hardship. Well, I can't find my cell phone. Or I'm a Yankee fan in a congregation of Blue Jay fans. That's not hardship. It may be endurance, but not hardship. It's aggravation. But I mean, we don't totally understand the terms like the first century Christians did because they were tortured to death sometimes for keeping faith and holding true to the faith and trust of them, which is the same faith hasn't changed. 2000 years has been entrusted to each one of us.

You know, and there's all kinds of passages in the Bible that, you know, in Hebrews, Jesus, who for the joy, set before him endured the cross. Well, I'm sure he didn't seem as a Jesus, the man, but Jesus, Son

of God, but that no man would be joyful at facing prospects of being beaten to a pulp and then having to be nailed to a cross. But he endured that for us because we're his joy. He saw that we were the joy that he saw. So he endured and took away our sins. I'm going through some stuff with my eyesight now. My eyes are dimmer than obviously before, and I struggle a little bit, but it's hardly a hardship. And the hardships that we think are not like the hardships in other parts of the world where there are still Christian brethren who are in prisons because they dare preach the gospel or express their faith in other countries that don't recognize Jesus as Lord and Master.

So when we're taking this little simple feast that remembers what Jesus did for us each week, remembering that we are blessed, especially in this country, but in our lives because Jesus stood in our place and endured so that we didn't have to endure the cross ourselves. And so I'm learning that in my new battle in life that enduring and hardship are relative terms, and they mean different things to different people. But in the spiritual sense, we're free because of Jesus and cared and persevered for us. And for that, we should be eternally grateful. Let's go to God in prayer at this time.

Dear Heavenly Father, we're so grateful for the lives that you've given us, the freedom that we have to express our Christian fellowship and worship to worship to you and fellowship to each other and to share the gospel. But to remember in a some in the simple feast that you died for us, you took away our sin, you shed your blood so that you stood in a place for us and you paid the price so that we didn't have to pay it ourselves. So Father, for that simple reason, help us to feast in faith and to be grateful. In Christ's name. Amen.

## Reading

### James 4:1-6

Reading this morning is taken from the book of James. It's the first six verses of the fourth chapter. What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire, but you do not have. So you kill. You covet, but you cannot get what you want. So you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you do ask, you do not receive because you ask with the wrong motives that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has created to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why scripture says "God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble."

## Sermon

Good morning everybody. We've got music coming from all over the place today, so that's good, that's good. So we're studying the epistles and today we're going to go through the book of James, really an amazing story. James is, how do you put this nicely, he's very direct in his teaching. He didn't suffer fools easily, especially when you read this book. He is very direct in his teachings. It's not difficult to understand what he's trying to say. Now who is this James? There are a number of James in the Bible, but James was actually a physical brother to Jesus. How many of us remember that Jesus had brothers and sisters? It wasn't just Jesus. And Jesus' sisters, well I'll mention their names. James of course, and then there was Joseph, and then there was Simon, and then there was Judas, no, not Judas Iscariot.

Judas was a popular name, and unfortunately the sisters don't get named. We don't know who these sisters were and are, but they're part of it. And so today as we go through the book of James, I hope that some of the things that we can say would be helpful to us as well.

James is one of the very select individuals that Jesus appeared to in the resurrection, which is amazing. James, a brother of Jesus, not a brother and sister in Christ if you will, but certainly a brother in Christ, but a physical brother, and he appears beside him. I can't even imagine what that must have been like. The Apostle Paul calls James a pillar of the church, and he calls us this in Galatians chapter 2 and verse 9. And what's interesting about James being a pillar in the church was that the church may not even exist today without James. Someone says, why would you say that? Well there was a time when Jew and Gentile had to make a decision. Are we going to come together as one or not? And so there was this council at Jerusalem, and it was James who said the right things that Jew and Gentile can come together. They trusted him implicitly. If James says it's right, it's right. If James says this is the right thing to do, we know that he has the thumbs up by Jesus, if you will. And when the Apostle Paul becomes a Christian, Paul immediately goes to see, who do you think? James. He's the one that can teach me. He's the one that can help me. And when Peter was rescued from prison, Paul told his friends, make sure you tell James that he was released, and that he's going to continue his discipleship and continue his preaching. James was a significant leader, as we talked about, the important council of Jerusalem, where we'll come together, we might have different cultures, but we really need to come together as one. It wasn't easy, and it was pretty strong-winded, and yet they did come together as one, and we're part of all of that today. And in the very brief book of Jude, James identifies himself simply as, I'm just a brother of Jesus, spiritually and physically. And most scholars believe that James was martyred around 62 AD.

One of the significant teachings of James is his emphasis on doing good to all. Even people who may have said some not very nice words or commented about you in a negative way, do good to all people. And he says living a life of faith is a faith that must be accompanied by a consistent lifestyle. Let's face it, we've all had bad days, we've all said things that are probably not very good, but Jesus is always encouraging us so that we can encourage others. James took up that mantle, and he proclaimed it, he preached it, he lived it all throughout his life. So what I want to do today is, looking in the book of James, we're not going to read the entire book, but we're just going to read different sections to get this understanding, this actually real good feeling about this wonderful man who put his life on the line for you and for me. And as he said, he's not a flowery person, he's just very direct in what he has to say. And he begins this way, and I don't know if it's the way that we would write it, but it's this way. It begins the book saying, be careful, be careful. Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds. Because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. And let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. James knows what he's talking about. And then he said, we're not all on the same wavelength, we're not the same economic conditions. So he says believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their position. But the rich should take pride in their humiliation, since they will pass away like a flower. Wealth doesn't necessarily equate salvation.

And then he says, when tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me. And then these beautiful words, for God cannot be tempted. He can't. He cannot be tempted. Try, go ahead, try it. Try tempting God. Zero success. God cannot be tempted. He can't be tempted by evil. Nor does he tempt anyone.

But each of you, when you're tempted, can be dragged away by your own evil desires and enticed. But don't do that. He said, don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Listen, every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits over all he created. And I read that to suggest that what he's saying is, let people see Jesus for the first time in you. Be that example. What, why is she so different? Why does she have such peace? Why, why does he just seem to go with the flow, even though there's difficulties in life? Because they know Jesus lives in him. And us today as well. Two thousand years ago, this was written and it's just as true today as it was there. So don't merely listen to the word and deceive yourself. Do what it says. Those who listen to the word, but do not do what it says, are like people who are looking at their faces in the mirror. And after looking at themselves, they go immediately away and find that they don't even know who they are. That's kind of a play on words, but that's what he's saying. What do I look like? Well, there I am. And I'll come back. And I come back. Who is that guy in the mirror? Who is the spiritual person is what James is trying to say. Be the example. Be someone who really is honoring God. And then in verse 14, what good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you claim to have faith without deeds, can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes, without daily food. If any of you says to them, go in peace, keep warm, well-fed, but does nothing about the physical needs. What good is it in the same way faith by itself? If it's not accompanied by action, that faith is dead, which means no faith. Let faith declare itself in so many beautiful ways.

So speak nicely chapter three in verse nine with the tongue. We praise our Lord and father and with it we curse human beings who are made in God's likeness out of the same breath come praise and cursings. My brothers and sisters, this should not be so. So he talks about wisdom. In verse 13 of chapter three, he says, who's wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. It comes from Satan itself. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every kind of evil practice. James, you're writing some tough things. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. Pure, 100 percent. Peace, loving. You love peace. Considerate of all things and all people. Submissive, yes I'll give. Full of mercy and good fruit. Impartial, everyone's welcome. Sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. Peaceful people do that. After a while of being around someone who is a person of peace, you feel like, this is wonderful. There's no competition. This is wonderful. There's this lovely conversation. This is wonderful. This is a person who truly does care and wants to help to the very best of their ability. And that happened 2,000 years ago, James is suggesting. And I'd like to suggest, James words, that is just as true today. Being submissive, being helpful, being caring, full of mercy, good fruit, impartial. Be a peacemaker. And then talks about giving ourselves to God. Of course, that's what we need to do. And then he says this in verse 7 of chapter 4. Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Now that's an interesting reading. Submit yourselves to God. Okay, I think all of us can. Resist the devil. Well, when do I do that? How do we resist the devil? Resist the devil when you know things may be not quite right. Satan wants to tempt you maybe just to go in a certain direction. And maybe it's not horrible, but it's really not the right thing to do. Resist that. And if you resist the devil, do you know what he does? He flees. He runs. Now he may come back, but you're going to prove to him he's not going to win. Because there's someone on my side. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and holy, righteous, loving people. And that's true today. So flee from that

when it comes. So flee from that when it comes. Grieve and mourn and wail and change your laughter to mourning and gloom if you're not going to live this way. But humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up. We sometimes wonder how we can get through things in life. And after it's all over we go, I can't believe I got through that. And then realize you didn't just get through it. It was Jesus who helped you get through it. I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. I'm always with you. I will always help you.

And so in the last chapter in James chapter 5, he talks about being patient. Patience in suffering. And that's not always easy. I know that many of us, probably all of us have spent time in a hospital or spent time in a sick bed for a long, long time. And we wonder, is this going to last? Is God calling me home? How is this going to be? I'm trying to be patient with this pain. I'm trying to be patient with physical pain, with emotional pain, maybe spiritual pain. I'm trying to get through it, trying to be honest about it all. How long is it going to take? How can I get through all of this? And he says this, "Be patient then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming." He says, "See how the farmer waits for the land to yield a valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient, stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near." Don't grumble, especially against each other. Don't do that. Because if you do, then maybe you'll be judged. And so we don't want to do that. And then he says, "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray." And it's amazing how often we find ourselves in difficulties and troubles, and we're trying to figure it out all by ourselves. And it's important to work hard to think about this. But it's also to remember, you're not alone. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, they will help you. Remember, you are never alone, even for one second of the day. I am always with you. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. And so if anyone is in trouble, let them pray. If anyone's happy, let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church, pray over them in the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make them well, and the God will raise them up. If they have sinned, if they have sinned, forgiven them. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. And then he says, "Remember this, Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain in the land for three and a half years." He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it didn't rain for three and a half years. And again, he prayed, and the heavens opened up and gave rain on the earth and produced crops. My brothers and sisters, if any of you should wander from the truth, someone should bring them back. Remember this, whoever turns a sinner from the way of error will save them from death and cover a multitude of sins. I don't know about you, but when I get to heaven, I want to see my parents, I want to see my loved ones, I want to see Jesus face to face. And after I go through a long list, I want to say, "James, do you have a minute? I just like to talk." And James is going to say, "Hey, we're in heaven. We can talk as long as we want." And this wonderful experience, these little books sometimes in the Bible that we just kind of pass over, they're so brilliant. If we put ourselves in their shoes, the love, the joy, the peace, the patience, the kindness, the goodness, the faithfulness, the gentleness, and the control, the Savior Jesus living in us every minute of the day, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am always with you. Amen.

## Closing

Thank Don for his message this morning. This past week, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, I was in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and had 35 people on a bus trip. And some ladies from Tintern, St. Catharines Church and Niagara Falls Church were with me, and we saw Moses. We also saw Elvis, so the sacred

and the secular. However, we went to a dinner theater on the Tuesday night, and then we went for a countryside tour with an Amish guide. And that was interesting, and people enjoyed that. And then we saw Moses. But whenever you go to a sight and sound theater production, you always gain something from that experience. Huge sets, elaborate costumes, original scores of music. But the Bible story presented. And there's always something that catches your attention in any of those productions. If you've not been, I encourage you to go sometime. But the story of Moses is well known. And he didn't want to go, and he stutters. I can't speak, Lord. Send somebody else. And so we know the story and sort of the hesitance. And he says, well, who should I say sent me? Well, one of the powerful moments that I played for me was when this booming voice of God says, I am sent you. Right? I am the Lord God Almighty, creator of the universe. And if I can do that, I can free my people. You need to have confidence in the Lord that he can deliver his people if he says he's going to deliver his people. So Moses, get on with it. But I am sent you. On some ways, I am the God of the universe, is sending each of us from this place too. And no matter what insurmountable task you might think is coming your way this week, or no matter what opposition you think you might face, or no matter what mountain you might have to climb this week, I am is with you. I am will deliver you from whatever it is. That is a challenge to you this week. So we thank Don for his message. And we pray that as we go forth from this place, we are his hands and feet. Let's pray.

Dear God, we thank you for this time together. We thank you for the love that you had in sending Jesus into this world. We thank you for his sacrifice. We thank you for his ability to point us all in a better direction as we live our lives here on this earth. And we pray that you will help us this week to be your hands and feet as we serve in our communities wherever we live. In Jesus name. Amen.

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