

Today, we find ourselves deep in the book of James with our sermon series Jim Time. If you think things get easier, think again. James refuses to let us escape into comfortable Christianity. James is like that friend who doesn't mince words, that person who will tell you, "Hey dude, you've got spinach in your teeth." James is here to tell us we've got a whole lot more than spinach in our teeth—we've got heart issues. Today James will get us trekking towards heavenly wisdom.

Our world is indeed captivated by wisdom. Think about all of the books, the motivational speeches, the social media content about wisdom. Multiple ways to flood us with sound bites about wisdom. But this is worldly content that aligns wisdom more with shrewdness and the 'get ahead at any cost' mindset. Content that aligns more with earthly wisdom.

In our passage today, James drops a truth bomb. James is redefining the currency of wisdom in the Kingdom of God. "You want wisdom? Great, but it's not about how many books you've read, how many degrees you've earned, or all of your business successes."

And make no mistake, this isn't going to be a good suggestion. James issues an essential element that defines the truth of our faith.

James starts this passage by throwing out a challenge question. Who is wise and understanding among you? Today we'd hear it said like this. "Alright, who thinks they've got it together? Step on up!"

James is not asking this question purely out of intellectual curiosity. He's pushing us to self-examine, and ask, "How does my wisdom and understanding show up in my work, my service, and how I live?" The answer according to James? "By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom."

Don't mistake meekness for weakness. The Greek word here is "prautes," which means power under control. Like a wild stallion that's been tamed. Still the same strong horse, but with power that is purposeful, directed, and beneficial. Another way to think about meekness? Courage cloaked in humility.

James is saying that the way we work, the way we go about our jobs, the way we serve, the way we handle relationships, should be influenced by powerful AND humble wisdom.

I'm looking at a roomful of incredibly talented, ridiculously skilled, and enormously intelligent human beings. That's a blessing. But our accomplishments and our IQs, are they characterized by courage cloaked in humility?" Do your accomplishments reflect the gospel?

Any answer but yes means that punching the clock, meeting the quota, or even serving at every church event, will come up lacking. Because the "how" of what we do work matters.

Next James dares to venture into – hold your breath - Demonic Wisdom

This part might be a bit rough. But as much as we would rather stay with nice things like heavenly wisdom, we owe it to ourselves to understand its sinister counterpart. What encompasses demonic wisdom?

We start with "Bitter jealousy" and "selfish ambition". Let the weight of those terms sink in a moment. This is darkness driving the bus. This is darkness masquerading as wisdom. Demonic wisdom won't come with pitchforks and sulfur; it's much more subtle. It lurks in the corners of boardrooms, friendships, and yes, even pulpits.

Bitter jealousy. It's not just mild envy of someone's accomplishments. It's that gnawing discontent, eating away at our souls, poisoning perceptions, and tainting our view of self. Questions like, "Why them, or Why not me?" That's bitter jealousy rearing its ugly head.

Selfish ambition is not an honorable drive for success. Its ambition gone rogue. It's being comfortable with your pursuit of goals turns into steamrolling and flattening, a little compromising of character to pursue your goals.

And of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, James corrects saying, “do not boast and be false to the truth.”

James warns in verse 16, "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice." Today we'd say. "Hey, you want to know the endgame of demonic wisdom? It's chaos. It's disorder. It's everything that is in direct opposition to the Kingdom of God."

Demonic wisdom doesn't build up, it destroys. It may deliver short-term gains, but it will leave a trail of broken relationships, compromised integrity, and a life in disarray.

Like James said earlier in chapter 3, none of us are guilt free. We've all dabbled in demonic wisdom. It has that sweet taste that leaves a bitter taint of shame. I know I'm thankful for God's grace that constantly calls me out of darkness and into the marvelous light. As God does for all of us.

Now that we've tackled that tough topic, let's luxuriate in that liberating Heavenly Wisdom.

James paints a picture, vividly contrasting Demonic Wisdom. "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere." Isn't that balm for your soul? (Repeat)

Let's luxuriate here a bit longer looking at the facets of this wisdom, starting with the first one. Heavenly wisdom is "pure." It's not driven by personal motives. This wisdom seeks God's glory above all. When our wisdom is pure, it's no longer about "me, myself, and I." It's about God's kingdom, God's will, God's glory.

But wait, there's more! Heavenly wisdom is also "peaceable," "gentle," and "open to reason." It comes in like a wrecking ball, but then enters like a gentle breeze, ushering in peace. It's willing to listen, to engage in meaningful dialogue, not a monologue. (Repeat)

This wisdom is "full of mercy and good fruits." It's not sterile. It's not confined to ivory towers of theology. It is wisdom lived out every day in the trenches of life. It is active compassion. It is a helping hand. It is a comforting word.

Finally, heavenly wisdom is "impartial and sincere." Authenticity and fairness. the cornerstones of heavenly wisdom. It does not play favorites; it does not put on a mask to gain approval. And it is not an unattainable ideal. Because this is a lifestyle shaped by our relationship with Jesus.

AND NOW, James closes with the endgame of Heavenly Wisdom. "A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." This is a harvest of righteousness that blesses not just us but everyone around us.

In which kind of wisdom do you operate? Is it a wisdom that disrupts or wisdom that brings peace? Is it a wisdom that serves self or wisdom that glorifies God?

I know this is an intense assignment. So how about some tools to make Heavenly Wisdom touchable, doable, attainable.

Before we get to those tools, we need to ask one more question. Why are we prone to choose the wrong kind of wisdom? (Repeat) The short answer—it's easier. It's so much easier to be driven by egos, ambitions, the need to one-up someone. It's so much easier to manipulate and scheme our way through. It's much harder to take a step back and ask, "What would Jesus do?" But church family, are you called to take the easy way? (Wait for answer) What are you called to do? Take the right way. Let me ask again.

Church Family, we have a clear example to follow. We have Jesus. Jesus is not simply an object of worship; Jesus is our model for living. Jesus epitomized Heavenly Wisdom. Jesus was pure in His motives, peaceable in His ways, gentle in His approach, and so full of mercy and good fruits. To walk in heavenly wisdom is as simple as this. Walk as Jesus walked.

And doing this practically involves things like:

Self-Examination: which means asking daily if your motives, actions, and words of the day were aligned with Heavenly Wisdom. If the answer is no?

Humility: Admit when you are wrong, acknowledge when you don't know something, humbly give credit where credit is due. Humility is the soil in which the seed of heavenly wisdom grows.

Be Open to Correction: When someone points out a flaw or offers advice, don't just dismiss it. Be open to reason, be willing to change—this is a mark of heavenly wisdom.

Grace: Be merciful, not just in big acts of charity, but in the everyday interactions. Extend grace to people like the barista who messed up your coffee, the co-worker who's hard to deal with, the family member who grows more difficult every day. Mercy is an indicator of the wisdom you carry. And finally.

Be Grounded in the Word: Heavenly Wisdom is rooted in God's Word. Spend time in that Word every day. Let God's Word correct you, guide you, and equip you for every good work.

Church family can we be a people committed to living like Jesus? Can we be a people committed to letting Heavenly Wisdom shape our choices, our actions, and our interactions?

Remember, wisdom is not about the complexity of our thoughts, it's about the integrity of our hearts. It's not about how much we know, it's about how well we love. And that, beloved church family, is a wisdom this world is desperately hungry for. So let's be the ones to show them what it looks like. Let's show the world how to trek to Heavenly Wisdom.