

November 13th Sermon

Faith that Works - Session 7

Investing Wisely- James 4:13-5:6

Introduction

Have you done any investment planning? Where do you intend to spend your money, your time, your talents, your energy, your dreams? What investments will have the most value in your life?

James starts these sections with the Greek words *age nun*. Translated literally this means “come on now.” Today we might say “get with it” or “pay attention.” So what is so important that James needs to grab the attention of his distracted audience?



The people that James was addressing are described using the Greek word *emporeuomai* (think emporium in English). These were wholesale merchants who travel from city to city both buying and selling goods. When they got together they would discuss where they had been, where business was good or bad, where were the most profitable stops on their travels, and other business-related matters. But they had developed a false sense of security. They depended upon themselves and focused on the value of their business dealings—on accumulating wealth.

Say a short prayer asking God to give you his heart for determining what has value in your life.

Planning for the Future

James isn't against planning for business or travels or the future. He isn't against making money or providing for your family. James is concerned about leaving God out of the planning. He's upset that the merchants think they have control over their future. They talk

and act as if they are successful all on their own. He is more concerned about what they are not doing, instead of what they are doing.

Group Discussion

Read James 4:13-17.

- Why is boasting about what will happen tomorrow an example of human arrogance?
- What is James' worry when it comes to planning ahead, focusing on profit, or desiring a successful business?
- What do believers tend to leave out of their planning?
- What would be a humble attitude toward planning for the future?
- Van Wick states, "Saying 'if the Lord wills' is not hoping that God's will is in line with ours but rather that our plans will be in accordance with His will." Why is this difference so important?
- What is the connection between James 4:13-17 and Luke 12:16-21?
- In verse 14, the word used to describe life is mist or vapor. Why did James choose this word?

Individual Study

- Boasting: Psalm 44:6-8, Jeremiah 9:23-24, Galatians 6:14
- Making plans: Lamentations 3:37, Proverbs 27:1
- Earthly Life: Job 7:7; Psalms 39:5, 78:39, 103:15-16, 144:3-4

Beware

What does it mean to be a fatted calf? The animal is removed from the pasture, confined to a stall and overfed. Then it is slaughtered. James is warning some of the members of his community in Jerusalem that they are setting themselves up for the same fate. Apparently these followers were hoarding, overindulging, and exploiting their way through life. They didn't get it. Being rich can be a burden because it is harder to follow Jesus' teachings if you have a life of abundance. Your actions—what you do with your wealth and how you earn it—matter.

Group Discussion

Read James 5:1-6

- In what way is wealth a burden? Why would someone weep about being well off?
- What is the day of misery? What are the last days to which James is referring?
- Wealth in James' time was visible by the food eaten, the clothes worn, and the precious metals on display. What does James 5:2-3 say will happen to such wealth?
- What are the visible signs in our culture of wealth? How should Christians view wealth?

- Some have called the lifestyle of the rich and famous a waste of resources. Do you think James would agree? Explain.
- How are the wealthy taking advantage of their workers? Of innocent men? Do you see examples of this in our culture?
- How is what James describes a sign of pride and arrogance?
- How might these verses be an encouragement for the poor and mistreated?
- If earthly treasures are of no value in the coming kingdom, how should you look at your financial situation and your future?
- What do you believe are your wisest investments for the future?
- In James 5:4, the workers are shouting for help from God because they have been defrauded of their rightful wages. We see this in our society today. If you were an employer, how would these words of James inform your payroll decisions?

Individual Study

- Compare 1 Timothy 6:17-19 with James 5:1-6. What are Christians supposed to do with their wealth?
- Jesus is also concerned about the burden of wealth. What does he say about it in Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31, and Luke 18:18-30? Notice that this story is repeated 3 times in the gospels. What does this tell you about the importance of its message?

Commitment

This week I will invest wisely in my future by taking the following action:
