**The Humility of Wisdom**

**The Word**

Read together James 1:2-8 and 3:13-18

**The Big Idea**

Biblical wisdom consists in a humility that pursues wholehearted devotion to God and his ways, and seeks the flourishing of the community God is forming.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. As you look back over the course of your life, what living person has been a significant source of wisdom for you? Describe that person a bit and what makes them unique.

2. According to James, worldly wisdom is steeped in selfish ambition and bitter envy. On Sunday we discussed the unique ways each of us experiences envy/jealousy. Where specifically have you had to contend with jealousy in your own life?

3. Discuss the interpretation given of James 1:5-8. In what ways was that helpful and/or in what ways would you push against that interpretation?

4. As you look at the vision of wisdom James gives us, is there anything specific you feel called to pursue or change in the coming weeks?

**Neighboring Question of the Week**

This Sunday we discussed the next Grace in Action initiative on neighboring. As you consider your own experience of neighboring on your street/apartment complex, what kind of a neighbor are you? Where have you been intentional as a neighbor, and where specifically would you like to see yourself grow in your intentionality as a neighbor?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. We live in a world full of information but desperate for wisdom

“Where is the Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” – T.S. Eliot

B. In this passage James lays before us two kinds of wisdom, one that leads to peace and righteousness, and one that leads to disorder.

II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

A. It’s source (v. 15)

1. Earthly: it’s the way the world naturally thinks about things

2. Unspiritual: it’s not coming from Holy Spirit

3. Demonic: this world is under the influence of dark spiritual forces

B. It’s Internal posture (v. 14)

1. This “wisdom” starts with ourselves at the center of the universe. I am here to pursue my own happiness, fulfilment, satisfaction.

2. “Selfish ambition”

= I am committed to building my own kingdom. We all have our own ways of doing this (accomplishment, wealth, knowledge, reputation, security)

3. “Envy/Jealousy”

= When I compare my kingdom to someone else’s, and theirs looks better. We all have our areas where we feel this (possessions, experiences, talents, success)

C. It’s External Fruit (v. 16)

1. When people who have selfish ambition and envy are put together in community, egos are triggered, and disorder and evil practice ensues

2. We see this happening in our nation today, and unfortunately this happens all too often in the church.

D. This helps explain James 1:5-8

1. The doubt that James is talking about there is not simply wondering whether or not we’ll receive a clear answer from God when in a moment of crisis. Rather, the doubt comes from hanging on to our own kingdoms and not being fully committed to God’s kingdom, such that when he does give us his wisdom, we doubt the wisdom he offers because we don’t want to here it.

2. God gives “generously” (or better “purely, singularly) = he is 100% committed to our good and growth in maturity in what he gives us

3. But we are “double-minded”: one mind committed to God’s kingdom, and one mind committed to our own

4. So we are like a wave tossed back and forth by various forces.

III. Godly Wisdom

A. It’s source (v. 17)

1. From Above

2. This wisdom comes from God as a sheer gift. It’s something God has to bring into our lives by his grace.

B. It’s internal posture

1. The humility of wisdom (v. 13). Wisdom and humility are fundamentally linked in Scripture.

a. “The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” Proverbs 9:10

b. Wisdom begins with a view of the universe centered on God and his kingdom rather than the self.

c. God created the world in wisdom, wisdom is baked into the fabric of creation, and we become wise as we live within God’s guidelines

d. Wisdom is not hidden, secret. Wisdom calls out on the streets (Proverbs 1)

e. “Where then is boasting?” in light of the cross (Romans 3:23-27)

f. God is forming a community of sinners saved by his grace

g. So biblical wisdom is recognizing it’s not about me, it’s about God

and the community/fellowship he’s forming

2. The other postures of wisdom (v. 17)

a. Notice how humble these postures are

b. Notice how centered they are on fostering God’s new community

C. It’s external fruit (v. 18)

These people bring peace and righteousness where they go. They quietly go about their lives, focusing on God and others.