**Boasting in Christ**

**The Word**

Read together James 1:9-11 and 5:1-6

**The Big Idea**

Our riches in Christ are an equalizing force among rich and poor Christians in the community of faith. Poor Christians can boast in all their spiritual riches in Christ, and rich Christians can practice humility and hold loosely to their wealth in order to focus on their true riches in Christ.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Consider Paul’s statement in Galatians 6:14: “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” What are you most tempted to boast in/put your confidence/delight in apart from the cross of Christ?

2. On Sunday we talked about how wealth is relative. When you hear the label, “the rich,” is your gut reaction to identify yourself with that label? Why or why not?

3. Where specifically has your wealth and material resources played a negative role in your spiritual life? Where have they played a positive role in your spiritual life?

4. Read together James’ strong words in 5:1-6. What verse or image from that passage stands out to you most and why?

5. James calls the rich to “boast in their humiliation.” Discuss what that means, and try to come up with some practical action steps to obey that call this next month.

**Neighboring Question of the Week**

When have you experienced someone on your street/apartment complex being an intentional or thoughtful neighbor to you?

**Sermon Outline**

I. This passage is about boasting

A. This word refers to the things that bring us a sense of pride, confidence, security, legitimacy, or joy. It refers to the rock we’ve planting ourselves on as a foundation. Consider the English phrase: “this is my pride and joy”

B. The Apostle Paul regularly uses this word and does so in some very surprising ways

C. Read Galatians 6:14

1. At one time Paul had it all from a worldly perspective (wealth, respect, power, and influence)

2. Then he encountered the cross of Christ and came to terms with both his true spiritual poverty but also the surpassing worth of the gospel

3. The cross became his boast, pride, joy, source of confidence, and when that happened his love affair with the world was forever severed

a. The world was crucified to Paul: it lost its luster and appeal. Things he used to care deeply about he no longer cared about in light of the worth of Jesus

b. Paul was crucified to the world: he no longer looked impressive in the world’s eyes, he was a poor traveling preacher without status

D. In our passage, James is calling us to a similar reversal of boasting

II. Believers in humble circumstances (v. 9)

A. The lowly

1. They have low economic status and therefore low social status. They experience scarcity, vulnerability, unimportance, and feelings of powerlessness

2. Their temptation is towards discouragement, inferiority, despair, resentment, or overestimation of the rich

B. James’ invitation: Boast in your high position

 1. They are to take pride in who they are in Christ (see Ephesians 2:4-7)

2. In the midst of their worldly poverty, they are to focus on their spiritual riches (every spiritual blessing in Christ), spiritual status (children of the living God) and spiritual security (heirs of eternal life)

III. The rich (v. 10-11)

A. Remember that wealth is relative (relatively, we are all at the top tier of wealth)

B. Scripture doesn’t condemn wealth itself as a sin but rather warns against it as a spiritual danger

C. The danger is wealth becomes an alternative boast instead of God by promising things that God promises to give us (security, status, significance, satisfaction, power and influence in the world)

 D. All of this leads to a dangerous illusion of entitlement and self-sufficiency

 See Revelation 3:17

E. In the midst of the “city of lights” of all our worldly riches, the glorious stars of our gospel riches get dimmed in our perspective

F. James 5:1-6 warns rich oppressors of the coming day of the Lord where their short-sighted perspective will be seen for what it was and their unjust practices will be brought to light.

G. So in chapter 1, James wants to warn his wealthy Christian hearers of those dangers

 1. His call is to “boast in their humiliation”

2. This is probably an extreme way of calling them to humility and a recognition of how fleeting their lives actually are

3. We should regularly consider our worldly riches as “hevel” (“smoke” from Ecclesiastes), imagining them gone at any moment, so that we hold them very loosely and focus on our true spiritual riches.

4. We can “consider it joy” whenever anything doesn’t go well with our worldly pursuits in that it can recenter our hearts on God’s kingdom.

5. Jeremiah 9:23-24