**Humble Yourselves and He Will Lift You Up**

**Easter Week Daily Readings**

Monday: Luke 20:1-26 Tuesday: Luke 20:27-21:4 Wednesday: Luke 21:5-38

Thursday: Luke 22 Friday: Luke 23 Saturday: Psalm 22

Sunday: Luke 24

**The Word**

Read together James 4:1-10

**The Big Idea**

James confronts the underlying selfish desires of the human heart that are the root of so many relational conflicts, and he calls us to repentance and humility before God.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Consider the last time you were in a significant “fight” or “quarrel” with another believer. If it’s appropriate, share with the group what you noticed about some of your own selfish desires brewing under the surface that contributed to the unhealth of that conflict.

2. Consider Paul’s comments in v. 4 about friendship with the world vs. friendship with God. Imagine a friend says to you, “I don’t think it’s wrong to love the things of this world. I love March Madness, ski trips, Taylor Swift music, and a nice meal at a fancy restaurant with friends. Is James saying I should abandon all of these things?” How would you explain v. 4 to that person?

3. Consider the series of commands for repentance in v. 7-10. What strikes you about that list in general? And is there a specific one that is standing out to you personally?

4. The gospel has the power to transform our lives when Christ is experienced as the truest satisfaction of the deepest desires of the human heart. In this regard, consider the George Muller quote at the end of the outline. Describe your own experience (or not) of regularly having your soul happy in the Lord.

**Neighborhood Question of the Week**

Share any encounters you’ve had with neighbors over the past week or so. What did you notice about yourself in those encounters, and what opportunities did God present by way of deeper conversation?

**Sermon Outline**

I. James addresses a common symptom: war within the church

A. He uses hyperbolic language (kill, quarrel, fight) to paint the ugliness of unhealthy conflicts in the body of Christ

B. Christian community is far from perfect.

“Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves. The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an individual and to a community, the better for both.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

II. James goes after the root of relational conflict: the war within the human heart

A. The cause is desires/cravings deep within the human heart

B. The heart is a desire factory constantly churning out desires

1. carnal desires for food, sex, substances, tangible pleasures

2. material desires for more and nicer things

3. experiential desires

4. social desires to be seen, acknowledged, respected, etc.

C. These desires are often insatiable, presumptuous (I deserve to have this desire fulfilled), and self-contradictory (“they battle within you” v. 1)

D. These desires often aren’t brought to God in prayer because we intuitively know he probably isn’t particularly interested in fulfilling these desires in the way we desire. He often says “no” to our prayers for these things (v. 2-3

III. James goes a level deeper to describe the spiritual condition these desires represent: friendship with the world (v. 4)

A. The OT prophets confronted Israel with their idolatry (= spiritual adultery) in worshipping other God and Yahweh in hopes of getting the best of both worlds.

B. Likewise, James confronts his readers with their fundamental allegiance to the desires and cravings of this world while still claiming to worship the one true God.  
C. Verse 5 presents a challenging interpretive question

1. James may be saying that God jealously longs for our spirits the way a husband jealously longs for his wife’s sole affection (which is certainly true)

2. Or James may be saying the human spirit inside us is one that constantly craves and longs for more and more in an insatiable way (which is also true)

IV. James’ Solution: Grace-fueled repentance

A. God gives more grace to meet the needs of our sin and brokenness (v. 6a)

B. God’s grace is offered to a particular kind of person: A humble person (v. 6b)

C. James calls us to humble repentance

1. Ten commands that all demonstrate true repentance and humility

- submit, resist, draw near, wash, purity, grieve, mourn, wail, turn laughter to mourning, humble yourselves Purify your hearts

2. Paul is calling for drastic grace-fueled action (like the prodigal son who came to his senses, turned around, and ran for home)

Finds a father: full of compassion, runs out to him, showers love/grace

D. James offers beautiful promises

1. God will give grace to the humble

2. God will draw near to those who draw near to him

3. God will exalt those who humble themselves

4. There is an experience of the nearness, grace, and tenderness of God waiting for those who will humble themselves and pursue him with all their might that is far better than the Both/And experience of pursuing the world and seeking God

E. We must invite God deep into our hearts where all those unhealth desires lurk to bring his grace, love, and superior blessings

F. “I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; how my inner being might be nourished by the Lord.” - George Muller