**The Wisdom from Above**

**The Word**

Read together James 3:13-18

**The Big Idea**

In a world of division and speaking over each other, James calls us to adopt God’s wisdom which practices humility, love, and the fruit of the Spirit even as it engages in potentially divisive conversations.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Prior to reading Sunday’s passage and hearing Sunday’s message, if someone asked, “what is wisdom,” how would you answer them? And how does James’ description of wisdom surprise you or defer from what you would typically think of?

2. Consider the description of heavenly wisdom’s qualities in v. 17 as well as how those were described in Sunday’s message. What specific quality is standing out to you as most important in today’s moment? As one you’d like to work on yourself?

3. On Sunday we were encouraged to practice “achieving disagreement.” What do you think of that idea? Have you ever been in a conversation where you thought that was done well?

4. Are there any ways you’d want to push back on Sunday’s message or explore certain related territory that wasn’t covered on Sunday?

5. Do you currently have any spaces or relationships where you’re able to explore challenging and potentially divisive conversations in a safe and loving context? If not, why do you think that is? And if so, what’s that like?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. A story: Thanksgiving dinner gone bad

B. James is very concerned about our speech as he realizes the tongue has immense capacity for both good and evil.

II. James’ view of wisdom

A. Knowledge enables us to get things done, but wisdom enables us to do the right things

1. The wisdom from above gets the things done that God thinks are good and leads to peace

2. The wisdom from below gets things done that demons think is good and leads to chaos and division.

B. Wisdom is about a right mind and a right heart.

1. We often think of wisdom as believing the right things in our heads (the what), but James is equally concerned with holding the right postures towards others in the heart (the how): love, the fruit of the Spirit

2. “I spoke my mind,” but in the process you also probably spoke your heart

3. The New Testament is very clear and consistent on this emphasis of matching the true message in the head with a message of a loving heart

See 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 3:15-16

4. In a sense, there are two forms of “heresy”: one that denies the truth, and one that refuses love. Both depart from the way of Jesus

C. A description of the wisdom from above

1. Pure: set apart, without mixed motives

2. Peaceful: Shalom, wholeness, the way things ought to be. When a conversation ends, is there more wholeness than when it began?

3. Gentle and open to reason: Being genuinely open to the other’s viewpoint and willing to change your mind if need be.

4. Impartial and sincere: treating the other viewpoint fairly and making sure they know you genuinely care for them.

- Achieve disagreement: Can you state the other’s opinion AND feelings about the issue in a way they would be satisfied with? That requires impartiality and sincerity.

III. The metaphor of the lawn: Don’t worry about the weeds; just grow healthy grass

IV. Practicing healthy “Spiritual Friendship” by Aelred of Rievaulx

A. Practice “conversational hospitality”: taking another person into your life with a quiet center that can offer space to them

B. Uninterrupted time: many of these conversations take extended time together

C. The absence of an agenda other than to genuinely love the other person