**Your Life Is a Vapor**

**The Word**

Read together James 4:13-17

**The Big Idea**

James calls us into a humility that acknowledges the Lord’s own sovereign purposes in all our plans and even our very lives.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What from Sunday’s message stood out to you most and why?

2. Scripture regularly invites us to consider how fleeting our lives are. Take a minute to honestly assess how often that thought is present for you and how that shapes your daily life. What issues emerge as you consider that?

3. James encourages us to say “if the Lord wills we will live and do such and such.” Do you think we should adopt that way of speaking into our regular conversations? Would you consider doing that yourself? Why or why not?

4. If you knew you had one year left to live, how would that change how you’re going about your life? What would you do differently? What would you start doing? Stop doing?

**Sermon Outline**

I. The scenario

A. James presents a scenario that feels entirely natural to every one of us: a person is making business plans for the next year that involve time, travel, trade, and expect a profit.

B. James calls this kind of thinking “boasting in your arrogance” and “evil” (v. 16). The issue is the pride of presumption that forgets that our very lives and every single aspect of them are in the hands of a sovereign God.

II. That kind of thinking presumes that we will actually be alive in a year and forgets that our lives and the length of our days are in God’s hands

A. Your life is a vapor (v. 14)

The word connotes steam rising from a boiling pot or possibly morning mist on a field/lake that burns off by mid-morning

B. The shortness of our lives

1. This is a consistent biblical theme (see Psalm 90:1-6 and Psalm 39:5-6)

2. Rather than minimizing this reality, the Bible encourages us to lean into it and ponder the shortness of our lives before God (see Psalm 90:12 and Psalm 39:4)

3. Our culture is pushing the exact opposite message (consider Bryan Johnson)

4. Earthly wisdom says, “this life is all there is, so don’t think about death and extend life as long as you can,” but Biblical wisdom says, “wisdom comes from knowing your small place in God’s world and living this very short life on earth in light of eternity.”

5. Consider Jesus’ story in Luke 12:15-21 about the man who makes a business plan to secure his life here and is called a “fool.”

C. The utter dependence of our lives on God’s ongoing sustaining care

1. See v. 15: If the Lord wills “we will live”

2. We are not autonomous beings that self-exist. Life is not a right owed us. Life is an ongoing gift from God that depends on his moment by moment sustenance (consider Paul’s words in Acts 17:25, 28)

III. That kind of thinking presumes that we can predict the future, make a plan, and execute on that plan just as we expect without taking God into account

A. But you don’t even know what will happen tomorrow (v. 14)

B. Another consistent theme in Scripture is that our plans must be set in light of God’s plans (see Proverbs 16:9 and Psalm 33:10-11)

C. Scripture does not condemn planning but rather calls for planning that acknowledges God’s purposes and our dependence on him (Psalm 127:1)

D. There are so many external factors out of our control that only God can control

E.g. Covid

E. There are so many internal factors that only God can control

Even things we think we can count on (talent, work ethic, skill, etc) can be taken away from us at any moment. E.g. Simone Biles in 2021 Olympics

IV. James’ admonition is to say (and actually live) “If the Lord wills”

A. Example: St. Francis of Assisi

His plans came to nothing and he had to come to terms with his total dependence on God for everything (as if everything was hanging upside down). And he found freedom in that humble dependence.

B. What if you had one more year to live?

1. Humble gratitude: Taken nothing for granted but appreciating the moments.

2. Kingdom clarity: Avoiding triviality and so many of the things we worry and strive for, and pursuing what is most important for eternity.

3. Willing Interruptibility: Recognizing our plans don’t matter all that much and being open to God’s plans that he puts in front of us each day.