

Clearcreek Chapel, Pastor Michael Engle

## **Struggling in our World**, James 4:13-5:12

### **Introduction**

Perhaps you have heard of a few of these people from recent history - Idi Amin, Muammar Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein. These are just a few of the names we associate with great wealth at the cost of the people they were over. These men amassed great fortunes at the expense of the poor and needy they controlled. Today we will talk about men like this, men who make fortunes at the expense of others. Men who ignore pain and suffering while living in the very lap of luxury.

We have our ideas about how people like this should be treated. How they should be judged. Some of us even cheered their demise as we watched what was theirs be taken from them by force, all the way down their lives. We will talk about how Christians should respond when they are under men like this. What is it they should do? What is it God tells them to do? When suffering to the point of death, how is it that God, through James, tells us to respond?

James has labels for these two different kinds of people we will be discussing. First is, the "Come now's". Or, I like the way the NLT puts it as well, instead of the "come nows" they are the "look here's". Since we have all been children at one time or another we know exactly what is happening when someone says to us, "come now" or "look here". They are getting ready to point out something important to us. We need to pay attention, because whatever comes next should change the course of next few minutes, or even, as the case is here today, the rest of our lives and possibly, our place in eternity. Yes, you should pay attention when your parent or spouse says "come now", but how much more when God says, "Look here".

Secondly we will look at "brothers". These, these brothers are folks we know well. These are the believers. These are the ones whose hope is in the risen savior that some of them may have known personally! I mean, it's only been ten to fifteen years since the resurrection. God does not address them with a "come now" or "look here" but he addresses them first and foremost as family. Make no mistake, there are things to learn here and they should pay close attention, but not because they are being warned, no no far from it, they are being brought into the gentle embrace of a Father. tears in his eyes for what he knows is coming in life and ready to hold them close as he shows them the hope that is beyond what they know.

We will split our "come nows" or "look here's" into two part as the text does. First we'll deal with the "Movers & Shakers" in vs 13-17, then we'll deal with the "Money Makers" in vs 1-6. As we start of here in verse 13 I want you to remember who we are talking to here in the book of James. This man is rich, he is thought of as wise, we saw that in chapter three, he's not good with his tongue, he is causing quarrels and fights among God's people. So let's zoom the camera in on our man and see what he is struggling with now.

### **Movers and Shakers**

Look down at the text in verse 13 and we'll see what God has to say to the Mover's and Shakers. This is what God's word says,

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—

Now you see why I call them the movers and shakers? These are the kind of folks who travel around making deals and shmoozing with the in-crowd. These are certainly not the farmers and servants that would have been expected to stay in one place. These people are out and about making profit. They are, moving and shaking as it were.

But look down at verse 14 to see what God has to say about their moving and shaking. God's word says this,

14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

Whao! This was surely a shock to our listener. He has plans. He has places to go, things to do, people to see and God lays down this doozy. Your life is no more than a breath on a cold winters day. There...and gone. Your plans, power and relationships...poof. Gone in the blink of an eye. You and all you were about will have come to, a possibly, abrupt end. No fan fare. No great send off. Just...gone.

Hmm. You might say to yourself, "that's harsh. Wonder why God tore the carpet out from under him like that"? I'm glad you asked.

Look down with me at verse 15. This is what God's word says,

15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

See why? In all of their abundance. all of their planning and making profit they gave no thought to God. The one who had moved to create the earth and sky and sea, and everything that lives... who will one day shake this earth to its very core was not even an after-thought. He had been set aside in their self-glorifying race to fulfill the passions at war within them. And he tells them in no uncertain terms that they should not only give credit to Him for there moving and shaking but first and foremost for their very lives! Not only have they done these things with no thought for God but they boast in their own arrogance. I know this is easy to see in others so I'll just stop here for a moment and let you think of the examples you know of people like this. Perhaps in your life, or books you have read or on television. People who boast about their own arrogance. Who do you know like this?

God says it is all evil! It's disgusting, it's self deceived, it's just plain foolishness isn't it? Thank God we are not like the person you have in mind. Thank God we are all humble. Thank God we have jobs and warm homes and air conditioning and live in the richest country in the world and

spend our time going about all manner of foolishness without ever consulting God about any of it. Oh wait! How many of us thought of ourselves as we tried to find someone in our mind who has thought himself able to do as he wills. How many of us prayed aloud, or even silently that we would live through the ride to church this morning? How many of us look at the homeless, jobless or hungry and think, "well, if he'd have made better decisions he would have to beg". How many of us are movers and shakers with very little if any thought for God's will in all of it? Look here church, God says from the book of James, you are less than nothing if I don't will it to be so! So knock off your arrogant boasting and see life for what it is. All in the sovereign hand of God, not the sovereign hand of self. You can't even guarantee you will exit this building alive today. And so it is with the worldly movers and shakers who have forgotten God in the midst of their dreams and aspirations. This is our man in James. Is that you? Well God has a warning for anyone with such a mindset.

Look down at verse seventeen, this is a warning from God's word.

17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Yes, I know we use this verse for other situations, but look at the context. What is the right thing to do? It may be to make plans and travel here and there, but it is always to be in our heart, "If God wills". You know how we'll know if this is true of us? When our plans don't happen and God's will does not look like our own? What is our response? Do we trust God with it all and rest, or do we grumble, complain and fight against what God has brought to pass? The movers and shakers have been warned, and so have we. Now we move on.

### **Money Makers**

As we come into chapter five the camera lens should widen out from our one man who was the focus at the end of chapter four to the people sitting around him. These people may have brought in as guests. Maybe, we would liken them, to what we would call an entourage today.

It looked bad for the movers and shakers, but as the camera widens the view, it looks worse for the money makers. The rich crowd our man is hanging around with has not only forgotten God as he has, but they have gone further.

Look down at verse one of chapter five. God's word says this,

5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. 2 Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.

James now looks to the future for the rich person. All of their possessions they so proudly amassed have become nothing. The earthly treasures have turned into earthly trash and they now possess nothing. And that's not all. James goes on, their possessions are not the only thing

to be destroyed by time. Their wealth has corroded and will be evidence against them on the last day. When they stand before God their wealth will consume them like fire. It not only will not work for them, but it will be working against them for they have store up the wrong kind of treasure on the last day. A treasure that will condemn rather than save.

It gets worse for the money makers, they have not only stored up what will perish, but they have ignored what is precious in God's sight, people. Look down at verse four, this is what God's word says,

4 Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. 5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

We learn now that the rich made their money in part by keeping back from the laborers what was rightfully theirs. This money that consumed them in verse three is now crying out against them. What they thought would prosper them is now condemning them. Worst of all for these rich, the cry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. He will not stand by and watch what is being done but will bring judgment on the rich for their ways. While the poor suffer without, the rich live opulent lives without thought for those they have stolen from. In the last days when they should have been loving their neighbors they sat back in their comfy chairs with much food and entertainment while the righteous died for lack of necessity. And as if to put the final nail in the coffin James adds that they did all of this while the righteous did nothing to fight back. Not only did they have no reason to steal, but they had no resistance in the process. They are the very antithesis of the God who runs after the weak and unworthy and their condemnation is near.

## The Brothers

Finally, we move to the brothers. We have seen what the movers, shakers and the money makers are doing to the righteous and James will now tell us how the brothers are to respond. We will first look into the heart of the individual Christian. God's word says this in verse seven,

### Personally vs 7-8

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Oh, dear brothers, the rich will persecute and you may starve to death for lack of necessity, but this, this place is not your home. You may not have lots of business or possessions, but you are not to worry, but wait. Wait for what you ask. See in verse seven the hope that is better than piles of cash, many possessions, food and even life. The coming of the Lord is better than all of it. Be patient brothers and sisters as the farmer is patient at all times, early and late, and wait for the Lord. If you lose your life, so be it, your reward is so much better than whatever you might have

gained on this earth. Do you believe that church?

God, through his servant James, goes on to address how these dear brothers and sister are to respond in community to the suffering that is all around them. His word says this in verse nine,

### Communally

9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

What is the tendency of people who are suffering? It is to grumble at one another. James answers this tendency with hope and warning. My dear brothers, don't judge because the all righteous and holy judge is standing at the door. Your grumbling will only bring judgment on yourselves. But He is right here! So near. Don't try to do his job, but be willing to, again, wait for him to judge. Your trust in him should give you hope and the grace to keep you from grumbling.

So be patient, because the Lord is coming and do grumble because the judge is near. Do you see what he's saying. Your hope and your action all center around the coming of Christ!

You might say to yourself, how, under such suffering how can one stay hopeful and not grumble? Look down at verse ten, God's word says this,

### Examples

10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

James shows them through the example of the prophets, men like Job. Can you see them all thinking back to the story of Job (if you haven't read it, do so today) seeing the Devil himself question their God, and seeing Job stand firm and receive blessing in the end. Job, knowing the goodness of God says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Remember Job, James says, and bless the name of the Lord! Wait, and bless God's name!

### Your Word

Our time this morning ends with verse twelve and what might seem a bit out of place. We've looked at how the brothers are to respond under suffering and we've seen examples but God starts out verse twelve with ABOVE ALL. This is more important than the rest of what has been said. Yes, do the rest, but above that, most important is this...

Look down in your Bibles at verse 12, God's word says this,

12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

Above all, don't swear? Many of us think of swearing as using "bad words", but that's not what he

means. He's say that the brothers ought to, above all else, be truth tellers. They should not swear, or promise, by anything, not even heaven above or earth below. You've heard people do this. To give the impression of genuineness they say, I swear to God or I swear on my mother's grave. God says NO! No, that makes you just like the movers and shakers, just like the money makers and they are under condemnation. They promised wages to the laborers, they lied! Don't you do that and fall under condemnation as well. No matter what the circumstance, no matter how severe the suffering you tell the truth. Plain and simple. Be of the truth. You need nothing to make you more sincere, more heart felt, more genuine. You are children of the promise, waiting on the promised return of your Messiah, the hope of all time, you just answer with the truth! When you say yes, mean it. When you say no, mean it. Just like your Savior did when He told you he would return. He meant it! And all of your hope rests in that one truth. God means what he says. He'll be back. Now you do the same, you speak the truth and avoid condemnation.

### **Conclusion**

So, what do we do with all that we have heard?

Surely there are movers and shakers among us who go here and there for a time and make a prophet giving no glory to God for any of what they have or do. Stop. Stop today and realize that all you have has been given by God. Many of us scoff at the current leader of our country when he says, "you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen", though he doesn't know it, he's right. Without God you have nothing. You have no job without his consent, I don't care how hard you work or how great you are at what you do. God alone controls the universe and all that is in it. Not giving him honor for what he has given is sin and your are being condemned by the very success you think you have brought to yourself. Your wealth, talents, and achievements will be some of the very things that condemn you to Hell in the end. Repent of your self-sufficient arrogant heart before God and give all that he has made you back to him in worship and service of his kingdom. Not yours.

To the money makers out there with power over peoples lives and livelihoods...take care to treat them as though God will hear their cries should you decide to build your wealth by stealing from the laborers. He may be patient, but he does not forget and your eternal destiny is in his hands. To you I say repent as well. Turn your life and all that you have over to God for his kingdom. Not yours.

And to my brothers and sisters. Wait, wait through all the suffering of this world with an eye to the clouds and an ear for the trumpet sound for your Brother is coming. His word is trustworthy and He stands at the door even now, He himself waiting to hear his Father say, go, go get your bride and bring her finally and fully into this Kingdom!