

Daily Readings

Please note: The book of James is a book I like to read at least once a year. During the next few weeks the study guide will follow the book of James. This book is often misunderstood as emphasizing works over faith. Martin Luther in the 16th century referred to James as the “epistle of straw.” Luther believed that the focus of “salvation by faith” is lost in James as he teaches his reader about the importance of works as a person of faith in Christ.

James’ message is for the person who has lost touch with the high call of Christ in their behavior. It is far more than an “epistle of straw”. As the apostle Paul says, **“By your fruit you shall be known.”** Likewise, James knows that our life with Christ begins in faith, and then leads to a new way to live. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday June 21 – Read James 2:1-8. James reminds us that there is no social distinction in God’s family. All believers are one in Christ. Christians should never show favoritism based on position, power, race, color, wealth or popularity. Are you tempted to show favoritism in your life and faith? Do you expect to be treated better than others because of your station in life? Examine your attitude and motivations today. Pray that God will give you a pure and open heart to all persons.

Tuesday June 22 – Read James 2:8-13. James now starts to really meddle in our lives setting a high standard for our life with Christ. He calls us to mercy over judgment and love over all. I am reminded by these hard words of James we truly are saved by faith and not by works. It is only by the sacrifice and forgiveness of Christ that any of us find atonement from God. Start your day by giving thanks to God for the gift of Jesus Christ. End your day by confessing where you have faltered and pray again the same prayer of thanksgiving for Christ.

Wednesday June 23 – Read James 2:14-26. This is the most misunderstood passage in the letter of James. It is here that it seems James is promoting a work’s righteousness. **“Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”** (James 2:17) James is not advocating that we earn our salvation by works alone. Instead, James is emphasizing the importance of faith and works. Our greatest temptation as a follower of Jesus Christ is to think our salvation by faith is a free ride. Instead, God calls us to an even higher life of service out of love. What is one thing can you do for Christ today? How are you using your gifts and talents for Christ?

Thursday June 24 – Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-4. We break from our reading in James to pick up a passage in Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth. In 2 Corinthians, Paul writes to the wealthiest and most educated church of that day. Throughout both letters to the Corinthians, Paul’s reprimands them for their selfish ambition, arguments and lack of generosity. Here, Paul points out their lack of generosity. In this passage, he uses the poorest church of the day as an example of true generosity and faith. How would you compare these words from II Corinthians to the words from James? Is it not the case that we are one of the wealthiest, most educated and talented societies in the world? What is keeping you from following God’s call to radical generosity through tithing and sacrificial giving?

Friday June 25 – Read John 9: 1-7. John tells us this story of Jesus healing a man born blind. Jesus’ disciples are concerned with why the man was born blind. **“Who sinned,”** they asked. Jesus tells his disciples that no one is to blame. Instead, this is an opportunity for the glory of God to be shone. Where is God working in your life to give glory? Are you blind to something God want to do in your life? Does God need to open your eyes to see the light of the world? God is waiting to do a great work in you.



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, June 20, 2010

Joseph: From Prison to Palace

Wisdom (Week 2 of 3)

No matter how difficult life may seem, God has created us for a purpose. Our hope in this sermon series is to encourage parents to discuss the Joseph story with kids and family as they experience the same story at VBS. In addition, all of us can learn from the Joseph story the great promise of God’s promise to use even the most difficult and challenging times in our lives for good.

Genesis 41:37-39 — The Word from the Bible (Today’s New International Version)

The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?”

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.

Joseph

The story of Joseph was as well known as the great stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the Exodus, Joshua, the Judges and Kingdoms of David and Solomon. These were the stories of the Hebrew’s faith history. This history continues through us as we experience God’s goodness, care and providence over God’s people. We continue this week by looking at the rise of Joseph as the Pharaoh see the wisdom that God has given Joseph not only to interpret dreams but to administer a great nation. When Joseph is released from prison we begin to see the plan of God unfolding to use the hardships and tragedies of Joseph’s life for blessing.

Genesis 40:1-41:57

One of the expressions used to describe Joseph is “the Lord of dreams” or “master of dreams.” It is this mastery of dreams that brings attention to Joseph and eventually gets him out of prison. The gift of interpreting dreams gets Joseph attention and the chance to rise the great authority, but it was the wisdom given to him by God that gave him the ability to use the gift.

While in prison, word of his ability to interpret dreams spreads. Even the Pharaoh hears of Joseph’s ability and calls on him to interpret his dreams. Joseph is very accurate in his interpretations. This leads to the appointment of Joseph to run the government of Egypt. Each time that Joseph’s social status is improved, we are reminded that it is under the auspices of God.

At the height of his power, Joseph predicts, through the interpretation of a dream, a worldwide seven year famine. As such, Egypt prepares for the famine by storing grain to sell to other nations. Egypt rises to great power and wealth. With Egypt, the influence of Joseph increases also.

Wisdom

James gives us the best definition of God led wisdom in his New Testament letter. He addresses wisdom in both chapter one and three.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (Today's New International Version)

The main point of this text is that God gives freely in answer to prayers made in faith. Wisdom, essential to the full Christian life, is a gift of God and will be discussed more fully in 3:13-18. Anyone who lacks this virtue should ask God who gives to all generously.

James 3:13-19

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

According to this passage, true wisdom is a divine gift. Like faith, it is manifest in the positive ways in which we live. For James wisdom was not a just a matter of making good decisions but rather defined by the quality of one's life - peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

The opposite of true wisdom is self-centeredness. The constant focus upon self blinds one not only of the needs of others, but also blinds one to the guidance that God offers. James warns that this “self-centered” behavior is unspiritual and demonic. These are strong words of warning to any new or long time Christian who may be slowly turning inward in the secular minded society. It is easy to compare this passage to Galatians 5:19-23 where Paul compares a similar listing of “works of the flesh” and “fruits of the spirit” – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Next week we continue this series by looking at the life Joseph. The sermon will focus on the forgiveness that Joseph extends to his brothers. These are the same brothers that sold him into slavery. But Joseph sees the hand of God working to bring good out of harm.

***Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.
God is doing great things through the ministry of Trietsch.***

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for every one in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

The following prayers are for inspiration as you pray this week to seek the will of God.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!

The Universal Prayer, attributed to Pope Clement XI (1649-1721)

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.
I trust in you: strengthen my trust.
I love you: let me love you more and more.
I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship you as my first beginning,
I long for you as my last end,
I praise you as my constant helper,
And call on you as my loving protector.

Guide me by your wisdom,
Correct me with your justice,
Comfort me with your mercy,
Protect me with your power.

I offer you, Lord, my thoughts: to be fixed on you;
My words: to have you for their theme;
My actions: to reflect my love for you;
My sufferings: to be endured for your greater glory.

I want to do what you ask of me:
In the way you ask,
For as long as you ask,
Because you ask it.

Lord, enlighten my understanding,
Strengthen my will,
Purify my heart,
and make me holy.

Help me to repent of my past sins
And to resist temptation in the future.
Help me to rise above my human weaknesses
And to grow stronger as a Christian.

Let me love you, my Lord and my God,
And see myself as I really am:
A pilgrim in this world,
A Christian called to respect and love
All whose lives I touch,

Those under my authority,
My friends and my enemies.

Help me to conquer anger with gentleness,
Greed by generosity,
Apathy by fervor.
Help me to forget myself
And reach out toward others.

Make me prudent in planning,
Courageous in taking risks.
Make me patient in suffering, unassuming in prosperity.

Keep me, Lord, attentive at prayer,
Temperate in food and drink,
Diligent in my work,
Firm in my good intentions.

Let my conscience be clear,
My conduct without fault,
My speech blameless,
My life well-ordered.
Put me on guard against my human weaknesses.
Let me cherish your love for me,
Keep your law,
And come at last to your salvation.

Teach me to realize that this world is passing,
That my true future is the happiness of heaven,
That life on earth is short,
And the life to come eternal.

Help me to prepare for death
With a proper fear of judgment,
But a greater trust in your goodness.
Lead me safely through death
To the endless joy of heaven.

Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.