

September 27, 2015  
James 5:13-20

Proper 21B  
Prayer of Faith

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Last week we looked at how the Son Fixes Man as it related to James 4. This morning we are going to stay in James and look at the closing chapter of the epistle of James. You will see many things that speak to us today as well.

Hear these words from James 5:1-6:

*Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. <sup>2</sup> Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup> You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.*

Here James is writing to those that are wealthy and all that they live for is the almighty dollar and live as if Christ will not return. James is warning again of relying on the self. In this day and age it's what happens more and more often, we don't allow ourselves to trust in the almighty God. James words here are blunt, they are to the point. "You have lived on the earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you." Selfishness is what we live by. It's a constant warning by James. However, when we turn from our wicked ways, the Lord is there...more to come on this in a short time...

We now turn our attention to the next verses James 5.

*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. <sup>8</sup> You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. <sup>9</sup> Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. <sup>10</sup> As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup> 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.*

In these words of James we get a picture of what the context James is writing too. James is writing still to his brothers in Christ. James is writing to these people giving

them comfort in their suffering and persecution. He is talking about the return of Jesus in glory and how that coming event shapes our Christian life. In James 5:7 – he compares our Christian walk with a farmer being patient for the fruit of the earth to grow. You all understand that quite well, as we move closer to the big sugar beet harvest push. The fruit of the earth needs the early and late rains. Today as we go forward in faith we are reminded of the trust that we should have in the Lord. When we patiently for the Lord to come, we put our whole trust in the Lord.

James then moves forward and talks about not grumbling. That's something we all like to do, grumble and complain. We're told that Jesus' return is at hand and can occur at any time. The Judge is standing at the door.

James takes us back to comfort and consolation in our sufferings in this Lord. "We consider those blessed who remained steadfast," James writes. Indeed those that stay steadfast in the Lord will be blessed. They will no doubt be blessed when the Lord returns. We even receive the example of Job...the man who knew suffering beyond any other sinful human being. Job remained steadfast...and The Lord was compassionate and merciful to Job.

Then we get to our reading for today about the prayer of faith. James teaches us to pray at all times. A teaching that has been taught by St. Paul and even Jesus himself. *"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him..."* In all circumstances...pray.

It's fitting that James first asks..."Is anyone suffering?" After he writes about the patience in suffering. Is the person suffering from any harm, danger, or ill? Then Let him pray. God calls us to cast our prayers to him. 1 Peter 5:7 speaks about this as well: "Casting all your anxieties on him, for he cares for you." Jesus does care for you, he loves you. He wants to take your sufferings. God is indeed our refuge and strength and ever-present help in time of trouble.

When we pray a true prayer...true prayer brings strength, comfort and help. James after he writes about prayer...takes us into the hospital room. He wants the "elders of the church" called to the patient. The elders in those days would be the pastors of today. The main verb in this section is pray over him, if one is sick. The fact that the scriptures say anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, is nothing more than care for the physical body as well as the spiritual.

The participle that James uses means to rub a person's body with oil much as a nurse would do nowadays with alcohol. James wants to make sure that we understand that the prayer of faith is the main act when dealing with the sick. Prayer is the most important thing. "And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up." As we make our prayer of faith we are most concerned about their full healing in the resurrection, but now we also pray for the healing of the body.

The *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* once published a report on prayer. The report was based on a study of patients with heart disease. Five people prayed for half of the study's 799 participants at least once a day. After six months, researchers found no significant differences between those who were prayed for and those who were not. According to the leaders of the study, prayer is not effective at all. We know that prayer is effective, we can all come up with stories of how prayer has affected our lives and the lives of our loved ones.

This study from Mayo Clinic never disclosed the spiritual disposition of the "pray-ers" or even of the patients. This study also assumed that the only way to measure the effectiveness of prayer is if you obtain exactly what you are asking for in the material world. This goes back to the whole thing of our selfish desires taking control. When we pray in faith though, God answers our prayers...now he may not answer them in the way that we want them answered...but it is always according to his will.

When we talk about praying for physical healing...that is good and grand and needs to be done. However, we are all sick spiritually. We all have this disease called sin...and we need to be healed from it. No MD can ever come close to healing our disease of sin...but we do have a Great Physician who has taken care of that disease, Jesus our Savior.

James writes about this thing called confession...where we are to confess our sins to one another. Here is yet another place in Scripture where we hear the Word of the Lord talk about private confession and absolution. When we confess our sins to someone who represents the Lord for us, what a great reassurance of the forgiveness of sins that we have. When we do confess our sins to one another James ties in prayer...the prayer of faith, so that you may be healed. Healed of that sinfulness that invades your body and your soul.

James exhorts the entire congregation to call sinners to repentance in his last few verses. It's been said that there is not aspect of our lives that's private, only between "me and God." We hide behind facades of perfection, but sin and its consequences run rampant in our lives. Let on our own...we would perish. There would be no hope for us. However, our Lord has blessed us with a community of fellow saints to hear confession, pray for our needs, and restore us when we err. We hear the good news of the Gospel from them. God continuously sends into our lives those who pray for us, sing praise with us, and speak God's words of forgiveness to us.

As people healed in both body and soul, we may approach His throne of grace with confidence. We are healed because of that forgiveness that was won for us on the cross on Calvary when Jesus cried out "tetelestai" or "It is finished." Our sins were gone, they were made null and void. The debt was paid for. Then he rose from death to defeat death itself, and give us the promise that one our bodies will rise from our own graves and live for eternity with our Lord and Savior in both body and soul. As people healed by our Lord, he gives us the food of healing in his very own body and blood

given and shed for you. Your disease of sin was also washed away in the healing waters of Baptism.

If you read the entire letter of James, you would see even more that he writes a great deal about our Christian walk, how we are to act, how we are to care for each other, how we are to dismiss our selfish attitudes and live only by faith and live that out in our world today. In a world that is broken and in despair...a world that needs to hear the saving message of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus name. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.*