

## Saint Timothy Lutheran – Edmonds, WA

September 20, 2009 – Rev. Craig A. Patterson

### “Wisdom From Above.”

(Text: James 3:13-4:10)

**Context:** In his commentary on James, Dr. Lenski writes, “The readers (of James’ letter) have followed the earthly, unspiritual, devilish wisdom. James...calls on them to repent...These Christians in the Diaspora were degenerating frightfully...” (Lenski, p. 621). Believers in the first century Church were invited to listen and adhere to very ungodly wisdom. They were invited to become friends with the world of their day and were lured by promises of success if they would follow the world’s wisdom. The wisdom that the world was (and still is) offering was, as James puts it, “earthly, natural, demonic” (3:15). The wisdom from above, from God, is very different.

#### **I. The Wisdom Of This Fallen World Damages People And Their Relationships With God And Others.**

- A. Since the breaking of trust with God by our first parents, the devil has offered people an “earthly, natural, and demonic wisdom” (3:15).
  - 1. This wisdom brings with it “jealousy and selfish ambition.” (3:16)
  - 2. With “jealousy and self-ambition” come “disorder and every evil thing,” writes James (3:15-16).
- B. In the first century church, the wisdom of the world was having an impact on the Christians who were members of the congregation of believers in Jerusalem.
  - 1. In response to the declining behavior of the Jerusalem congregants, James calls the believers to repent and change.
  - 2. James warns the believers to not fall into a “friendship with the world.”
    - a. He writes, “...friendship with the world is hostility toward God...Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (4:4).
- C. James traces the source of the quarrels and conflicts of the believers back to their “pleasures (lusts) that wage war in” their members (within their own persons).
  - 1. He writes, “You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.
  - 2. “You ask,” James continues, “and do not have, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your own pleasures.”
- D. Still, the wisdom of the world teaches people to have self-ambition, to be proud, and seek after power. (Today, this wisdom of the world is still offered.)

#### **II. With Christ, God Gives Us A Wisdom From Above.**

- A. This wisdom is “pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy” (3:17).
- B. “God gives grace to the humble and opposes the proud,” writes James.
  - 1. Due to Christ and His work on the cross, sinners can depend upon Him. – We know that our sins are forgiven and have peace with God.
  - 2. Secure in Christ, we are enabled to humble ourselves before the LORD and trust that He will exalt us at the right time.
  - 3. At peace and secure in Christ, we begin to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. We begin to love and serve God and others.
- C. The lifestyle of Christians is now filled with repentance, humility, purified hearts and a single-minded purpose as we walk with our Lord and seek to serve God by serving others.
- D. God grants us His Spirit who, not only works repentance and faith in our hearts, but, also, empowers us in this new way of thinking, speaking, and acting. (See Philippians 2:13.)
- E. Christ makes us friends with God. Thus, we live with His wisdom from above.