



Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

The Wisdom of Humility - James 4

9/13/2020

*"The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know."
Albert Einstein*

As much as we may want to believe otherwise, there isn't much in our direct control. In fact, the only thing we can really control is ourselves. Beyond that life is about our posture toward, interaction with and sometimes reaction to everything else; those many, many things that have gone on, are going on and will continue to go on with or without me. This is why James 4:14 rather bluntly says "you do not know what will happen tomorrow." It's also why Jesus said not to worry about tomorrow; not a single one of us can control it, so why worry about it? Instead, we should focus on what's before us, which is today (Matthew 6:34).

If indeed the nature of reality is such that we as individuals have no direct control beyond ourselves (and the evidence appears to strongly suggest this is the case), then we would be wise to have a basic posture of humility. That is, recognizing even a very small fraction of what goes on without us, we would be wise to recognize how much we don't know. As James would say, you don't even know what's going to happen tomorrow, so why do you pretend to know what's going to happen a year from now? To do so is just boasting in my arrogance.

Instead, James teaches, our posture of humility should orient us toward God's will. Or, to put it into the kingdom language Jesus used, we should orient ourselves toward God's kingdom and what it's doing, and then let the rest of it (such as tomorrow and next year) come as it may. Now, as Bill so well expressed, it's important here to keep the two aspects of God's will very clear in our minds. There is God's temporal (or little "w") will, which can also be expressed as His desire. For instance, He desires that we should not hate, should not be greedy, should not use one another to satisfy our lusts, but instead should love and honor one another. Clearly this aspect of God's will is often violated. Then there is His ultimate (or big "W") will, which is inalterable and will not be violated. For instance, the beginning and the end of this world, as it was and will be. James, in verse fifteen is referring to God's temporal will, and recommending that as we make our plans we do so in light of what God desires for us. This is not because we can't do otherwise (clearly we can), but expressly because we do not know what will happen tomorrow. Therefore, the best way to live today is as God wishes, or, in the words of Jesus, "in the kingdom of heaven."

If we don't know of tomorrow, the question then becomes what to do today. If we are a follower of Jesus, that question then turns into, "If Jesus were to live my life today, how would he do it?" This is not to say that we are to try to live Jesus' life today. He already did that, and while it was incredibly beautiful, that life has already been lived. No, we are instead to live our lives as Jesus would live them, because of course his life was meant to show us what life in the kingdom of heaven looks like, and his death was meant to make that life possible.

So, Consider:

1. Do you believe you can only really control yourself? That all else is out of your direct control?
2. How does what we believe about our level of control affect our spiritual and emotional posture?
3. If Jesus were to live your life today, what might look similar and what might look different?

Take Action:

This week, spend time each morning considering how Jesus would live the day before you. Write down your thoughts.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Ben Scott