

“Adversity”

James 1: 2-4 and Genesis 6:9-10

Sunday August 5, 2018

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to ‘Honor thy father and thy mother,’ she asked, ‘Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?’

Without missing a beat, one little boy answered, ‘Thou shall not kill...’

Let us pray?

Many of us have learned that Jesus three closest disciples were Peter, James, and John. Writer of the book of James is not the author of this book of James that our lesson comes from today. One of Jesus’ brothers was named James. He was not a disciple of Jesus while Jesus was alive. After Jesus rose from the dead, James became a believer.

He grew strong in his faith. For James the seeing of his brother rise from the dead changed him radically. Faith for James was front and center in his life. It affected his everyday life. It was both practical and challenging. He believed that faith in Jesus

should affect every stage of our lives. James drank deep from the well of faith.

How many of you have tried to learn another language other than English? You are aware that translations do their best to communicate the meaning of the text in a way that is smooth.

Often times the translation is not exact. The same is true here. Our English says, "Count it all joy." The Greek leaves us the understanding that James is giving a type of command to let something come to your mind first. James wants for us to be full of joy. Let great joy come to our minds first. Let it lead the way in our thinking. When we deal with adversity, we can easily fall back into old habits. We can become anxious about it and worry. We feel overwhelmed. We can feel that this adversity will never end. We can be angry at the adversity or at the way we are handling the adversity.

James is encouraging to fall forward into a new way of handling adversity.

James wants joy to come to our mind when temptation comes, calamity, or trouble. The original language here says when a person falls into the midst of or is surrounded by adversity, first think about the joy. Basically James is saying that he wants us to have joy come to our mind when adversity comes our way.

How many of you had a party the last time adversity came knocking at the door? Anybody? This is not my first reaction

either. In fact, I would like to live in a world where there is no adversity.

I wrote the draft of my sermon on Monday. One Tuesday morning before I came to work, I called my insurance company to find out if the underwriters had a quote for me on New Mexico insurance. I currently have Texas plates and Texas insurance on my car.

Before I was done with the conversation, they informed me that my daughter cannot be on my policy anymore, because she is over 26 this year. She is not living in my and she is employed. Now I have to take her off my insurance and gift her, the car she is driving, which was the plan all along. In order to do that, I have to have the title to the cars. I can't find the titles to the car. Not only that but they will not write a new policy for me for New Mexico until this change is made. Add to that my Texas sticker has expired. I felt overwhelmed. Oh yes, and add to that I had to tell my daughter that the time had come for her to get her own insurance.

Some time ago a builder was drawing up plans for a wealthy gated community. It would luxury homes, schools, post offices, and shops. It did not have a church in the plans. When asked why there would be no church in this planned community, the builder said when people who are this wealth, and live in planned gated community, what need is there for a church?

The truth is we all will have adversity. Even those, in gated communities and upscale neighborhoods stand in the need of God's grace. All of us stand in the need of the grace of God.

In Genesis 3, that we looked at several weeks ago, it reminds us of the fact that adversity come into the world with Adam and Eve's disobedience. When we read about Noah we realize that people only made things worse. People were getting out of control. God was truly saddened and in pain to see the way people were treating each other. They were killing each other; they were involved with people outside of marriage. There was rape, anger, war and so much more.

I don't like adversity. Does anyone here like adversity? We don't hear as much about the space station as we used to. Astronauts would go up and stay in the space station for a year at a time. In the space station, there was no gravity which is fun for the astronauts. It wasn't long before they realized that muscles of the astronauts would atrophy in now gravity. The adversity of gravity was no longer presence. The muscles continued to weaken.

The same is true for us. The less we use the muscle of our soul, the less muscle strength we have. It turns out that there is good that comes from adversity. Adversity makes us stronger.

James had discovered the truth of this. The results of adversity intensified the ability to remain faithful to Jesus. People were being disowned because they believed that Jesus was the

Messiah. Families no longer would welcome a person who believed in Jesus. People were being arrested, tried, and put to death because of this belief in Jesus. Eventually they were being fed to the lions, stoned to death, or even burned alive. These were tough times.

In the middle of that James says let your mind and heart be led to a place of joy. In the first 20 years after Jesus died disciples of Jesus were happy that were put on trial, beaten, or even alienated from their families. They counted it a privilege.

That seems strange to us. Is it possible that there is good that comes from adversity in our lives? Is it possible that adversity in fact matures us in our faith, our souls, and all that we are as a person?

James tells us that the results of adversity brings greater ability and makes our souls complete and whole. I know that a lot of our Bibles translate the word telos to mean perfect. It is more accurate to translate that word as whole.

Our souls have their share of brokenness. Adversity is a reality. Isn't it good that by the working of the Holy Spirit in us, that our souls can be healed and made whole.

The Apostle said for us to be anxious in nothing in Philippians 4. We are to be anxious in nothing, but everything in prayer making your requests known unto God and from that results peace of Jesus that will pass our understanding.

If we put this together, it can go like this. The next time we face adversity take time to write down what it is that feels adverse to you or tell someone about the adversity.

Stop for a moment and thank God for the good that will come from this adversity. Thank God that He can take some difficult in our lives and use it for good. His desire is to heal the brokenness of your soul and make you whole and complete.

Third, make a plan to confront the adversity.