

Pentecost 17 9/20/15
James 3:10-4:10 18B

WHO IS WISE AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG YOU? BY HIS GOOD CONDUCT LET HIM SHOW HIS WORKS IN THE MEEKNESS OF WISDOM.

Who is wise and understanding among you? That's what James wants to know. So how about it, who is wise and understanding among us?

James tells us the candidate must be wise and understanding; showing good conduct in their life. Someone who when offended, doesn't get all riled up. Someone who isn't out to exact revenge. Our candidate must be meek, trusting in God, who always lets God have His way at all times and in all places. And, must also be pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. That is someone who is wise and peaceable according to James.

I. So, who is it? Who is wise and understanding among us? **NO ONE IS WISE AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG US.**

Look at James, and his brother John. They're fishermen, which means they must be good guys, right? They know what it means to be patient. And, they are apostles, chosen by Jesus Himself. But, they were also the guys who went up to Jesus and said, "We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." So, Jesus said, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they answered, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory" (Mk 10)." Talk about selfish ambition. They want position, power, and prestige for themselves. That's earthly, unspiritual; James even calls it demonic.

How about the others of the 12 apostles: Matthew, or Peter, or Andrew? They showed wisdom in their work. They were filled with mercy.

They trusted in God; they were martyrs for the faith, after all. Any of them could be a great choice if it were not for what Mark tells us in our Gospel. They traveled down to Capernaum and when they entered a house, Jesus asked them what they were discussing on the way. They didn't answer because they were arguing who was the greatest? That conversation showed their bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, boasting. This was not the wisdom that came down from above, but the wisdom that is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

What about St. Paul -- the greatest missionary the Church has ever known, at least in my humble opinion? He wrote $\frac{1}{3}$ of the New Testament, including these words, "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom." Then, he went on to tell the Corinthians what wisdom is. His words are gentle and peaceable to all. Paul would be a good candidate to be the wise and understanding one if it were not for the fact that he persecuted the Church, killing Christians. That's not wise. That just shows bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

How about you? Any of you want to volunteer? We are to be wise and understanding. We try to have good conduct. But, we fail.

There are those times when we are wronged. And, we get riled up. We keep a record of wrongs. We want revenge.

We are not always as trusting in God as we should be. We are more often than not centered on ourselves. When our way is not God's way and when He puts His way upon us because He knows what is best for us, we don't like it. In fact, we become filled with self-pity and curse God.

Our thoughts, words, and deeds show that we are not always pure. When it comes to being peaceable, gentle, open to reason, we are more often cantankerous, obstinate, unwilling to listen. We are not sincere. We

want things done our way and our way only, which means that our conduct is not always good and God-pleasing. We are not always wise and understanding.

Is no one among us wise and understanding? Is no one pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere?

II. THERE IS ONE -- JESUS. He is the wisdom that came down from above, incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary to save us.

As our wisdom from God, He knew our jealousy and selfish ambition, our disorder and vile practices, and He knew their wages were death. So, He allowed Himself to be delivered into the hands of men and be killed, and after three days rise again. He is the peacemaker, who by that sacrifice, established peace between God and you and you and all of your neighbors.

And He was Gentle. Think of the woman caught in adultery who was brought to Him. There was Jesus, drawing in the dirt, the scribes and pharisees stones in hand to stone this woman to death and He says, "Let him who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And they all dropped their rocks and go away, so Jesus very gently said to her, "Has no one condemned you ... Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more" (John 8).

And He is open to reason. He called the 12 to Himself and taught them. But, again and again, they did not always understand exactly who He was or what His mission was all about. Yet, He was always patient with them, talking to them, teaching them.

And He is merciful and full of good fruit. Jesus is leaving Jericho and Blind Bartimaeus cries out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus asked him what he wanted Him to do for him, and Bartimaeus said to Him, "Let me recover my sight." And Jesus says to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well," and he was healed and followed Jesus.

He is impartial and sincere -- He loves all people equally. Once, people were bringing children to Jesus and the disciples tried to stop them, but He said, "Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them." He even hung around with tax collectors, prostitutes, and other "sinners".

And when it comes to good conduct, doing works in the meekness of wisdom, no one is better than Jesus. Think about His arrest and trial. He is wronged, wronged in the most grievous way. He is on trial on trumped up charges. He is on trial for His life and He is silent. He seeks no revenge.

And look at Him as He goes to Golgotha and hangs upon the cross. There He is -- bearing all your sin, suffering God's wrath and punishment against all that sin. He is offering Himself as the pure Lamb. And He trusts God, letting God having His way, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit!" And God does have His way. His Son dies for you and rose again the 3rd day for you.

III. And because Jesus did that, what James calls A HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS HAPPENS. Your sins are gone. You have peace with God. When God looks at you, He did not see your sin. That is because in your baptism into Christ, God clothed you with the righteousness of Christ. When God looks at you, He does not see your sin. He does not see anything that is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. He sees the wisdom that came down from above. He sees Jesus. God looks at you and sees someone who is wise and understanding, because all of your life, your thoughts, words, and deeds, are covered in Jesus.

JESUS IS THE WISDOM COME DOWN FROM ABOVE FOR YOU.
Amen.