

# Two Kinds of Wisdom

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 14 January 2018

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] We turn back to James chapter 3. And just before we study it, I'm going to ask Duncan to lead us in a short word of prayer, please.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 1 : 55 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

constantly about Donald Trump. The book that's been published about him and the furore that's ensued as a response to this book, mainly by the man himself. He comes under great scrutiny again.

I was watching a news report a few days ago and they were looking at some of his more unusual behaviour and responses over the period. And they were showing one clip in particular of an interviewer who accused him, just in the passing and the course of an interview, of being not known for his humility.

They kind of accused him of being a proud man. And instantly he took offence and he bit back at the interviewer with great venom and he said, she said to him, you're not known for being a humble man, you're really quite a proud man.

And he said, I think I actually, I think I am actually humble. I think I'm much more humble than you would understand. And I think he went on then to say that, you know, he was actually the most humble.

[ 3 : 19 ] The whole gist that was, there's no one more humble than me. And, you know, you cringe watching it. You laugh, but you cringe because his great claims of humility just underline that he has none.

And I can criticise him as a fellow of you also. Now, James begins this next section, which really is the third section in this letter. He begins this next section with a question or with a challenge. He says in verse 13, as God the Spirit inspires them, Who is wise and understanding among you? Who is wise and understanding among you? Boys and girls, do you still get asked questions in the classroom?

Do you still get asked questions by the teacher in the classroom? And what does the teacher say? If you, if you know the answer to the question that you're being asked, and the question's going out to everybody, how do you tell a teacher, Lewis, or Grace, or Anna, or Katie, how do you tell a teacher, how do you show the teacher that you know the answer?

Aha. You put your hand up. You put your hand up, don't you? And I can imagine this question almost going out in the classroom. You know, we are students of God's Word.

[ 4 : 48 ] And we can imagine James as the teacher saying, you know, who is wise and understanding among you? To have a show of hands.

No, I'm not asking if there's a show of hands. To have a show of hands. You know, go over to the corner, one commentator has said. All the wise people, go and identify yourself.

Show us, tell us that you're the wise people. But the thing is, if I teach your Asta class of people, who is wise among you? And if you put your hand up, you're actually sure that you had no wisdom, really.

Anyone who puts their hand up and identifies themselves as being such a wise, considered, knowledgeable character, actually shows more of a lack of understanding than any sense of understanding or wisdom.

And James Foody goes on to state that. He says, verse 13, who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it. Put your hands down, he says.

[ 5 : 59 ] I don't want to hear anything. Let him show it by his good life. By deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

That's the whole theme, really, of James's letter. The way that we live matters. And it matters more than the claims that we make about ourself.

The way that we live, day to day, reveals more about who we truly are than our words do.

The way that we live, the way that we act, the way that we react, the way that we structure our time, the way that we go about our business, the way that we relate within our families and amongst our circles of friends.

It reveals more about whose we are than our words actually ever do. It's easy to speak when we're put under pressure.

[ 7 : 08 ] But it is much harder to maintain a consistent witness in all the mundane, routine details of our lives.

If we are Christians, says James, if we are Christ's ones, it should be evident in our good lives. It should be seen by deeds that are done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

I know I've said this before, but we need to hear it often. Your life and mine will be the only Bible that some people ever read.

And that couldn't have been said maybe 30, 40 years ago here. But that can be said with great confidence today. There are some in these communities who will not own a Bible.

There are some who will own a Bible, but it will never come down from the shelf. It will be some antique piece that belonged to a great-grandfather. And it has value in that, but it has no value in the sense of being opened and studied.

[ 8 : 15 ] So your life and mine will be the only Bible that some people here ever read. And so the assumptions that people who are like that make about Jesus will be on the basis of the lives that we lead.

If we identify ourselves as Christians, as Christ's ones, they will make assumptions about Jesus on the basis of how we live.

It says that we are ambassadors for Christ. Paul the Apostle said that. We are his chosen instruments as Paul the Apostle was.

So you and I need to be thoughtful and careful and intentional about the way that we live. And we get confronted with that time and time again in this little letter.

Will living and good life save us? Will our good works? Will our religious activity? Will our church attendance? Will that in itself save us?

[ 9 : 19 ] No. Jesus saved us. His grace. Not what we do or what we have done or what we have ambitions to do. It's what he has already done.

He said it's finished. The work of salvation is complete. So it's not our good deeds that save us. It's what Jesus has done on the cross that saves us.

The work of salvation is complete. The amazing grace of Christ that we sang this morning. It's offered to us freely. We are saved by the grace of Jesus. But if we are saved by the grace of Jesus, we will want to live our lives in a way that pleases him.

We will want to live our lives in a way that shows the world around us the character and the beauty of Christ. We will want to be thankful in the way that we live in obedience to him.

So how do we live wisely? How do we live in a way that glorifies Jesus? There's two things tonight in the time that we have. There's first of all a worldly wisdom to keep repenting of.

[ 10 : 36 ] And secondly, there's a heavenly wisdom to keep receiving. So that's the structure for the evening. First of all, a worldly wisdom to keep repenting of.

And I've got the word wisdom there in inverted commas in my notes. Because it isn't wisdom at all. This thing that's portrayed as a worldly mindset.

A worldly wisdom. So there's a worldly wisdom to keep repenting of. And James, true to form, he doesn't leave us with the grey areas.

James doesn't deal in genetics. He's not vague. But he gets thrilled down right into the details of this. He doesn't get lost in grey areas.

He gets right into the nitty gritty details of life. Sometimes we might be feeling ill. And we wonder what's wrong with us.

[ 11 : 36 ] We might just feel a little off colour. So we go to the doctor. Or the nurse. And we explain that we're not feeling that well.

And they'll have us sit on the chair. And they'll tell us to stand up. And ask a question about this. And a question about that. And then quite often what they'll do. Is they'll start to poke you. And they'll start to prod you. And as they're doing this. They're watching your face. And they're watching your reactions. And they'll say to you.

Does it hurt if I do that? And they'll say no that's not to you bad. Does it hurt if I put a wee bit of pressure on there? No that's okay. Does it hurt if I just touch there. And somebody leaps off the chair?

No. They know where to look. For medical problems. And James.

[ 12 : 33 ] As he's led by the spirit. He knows where to go. In identifying these crippling spiritual problems. That we wrestle with. And he identifies two.

In these verses. The first is bitter envy. And the second is selfish ambition. Look at verse 14. But if you harbour bitter envy.

And selfish ambition. In your hearts. Do not boast about it. Or deny the truth. Such wisdom. Inverted comments. Does not come down from heaven. But is earthly and spiritual.

Of the devil. For where you have envy. And selfish ambition. There you will find disorder. And every evil practice.

So there's two. Problem makers. That James diagnoses. As he addresses a group of Christians.

[ 13 : 31 ] Probably much. Much like us. And I don't think we have to work. All that hard. To try and understand. And figure out. What is. What does envy mean? And what does.

Selfish ambition look like? These are problems. That we see in the world. All around us. And these are problems. That we're honestly seeing. Within us. So let's think about it.

Just for a moment. First of all. Bitter envy. And the thing is. About envy. Envy is always bitter. Envy is never sweet.

Envy is something. That yes. We struggle with. And we wrestle with. And it sours us. Sours us from the inside. Out.

And envy essentially. It's a protest. Against God. And sometimes we can take these. Kind of things. And say well. They are the heinous sins. They are the huge sins.

[ 14 : 30 ] And we must stay away from them. But. Then there's the lower level sins. And. You know. We don't have to worry so much about them. And yet we have no warrant for such.

Envy is like a poison. Within us. And envy. Is a protest. Against God. Boys and girls. Do you remember this morning. Remember this morning.

We had a bag. Of sweets. Do you like a sweet again? You can handle it. Do you like a sweet. There you go. Let's keep the seed here.

If you don't have a sweet. Even though you've got a hoax. Awesome. Face. Close. Boys and girls. And then take the bag back. Before it's a distraction. For the next 40 minutes. You keep the bag. Do you need? Not 40 minutes. Sorry. 20 minutes. This morning. Boys and girls.

[ 15 : 34 ] Do you remember. I offered you a sweet. And you took it. And what did you say? He said thank you. You were thankful. You were thankful for what you got.

There's one or two actually. And as they took the sweet off me. They. They had one eye on the sweet. But they actually had another eye in the bag. And I could see.

Although they never said it. That. They had actually rather. One of the sweets that was in the bag. Than the ones they got. You could see the. The beginnings. Of envy. But envy.

Is the opposite. It's the alternative. To. To thankfulness. And envy. As we. Really think about it.

Envy is a protest. Against.

God. We look at people. We look at the things that they have. And we see that. We don't have.

[ 16 : 28 ] These things. And we envy. But it's a protest. Against God. Because. James 1. 17. We were. There weeks ago. God. Is the giver.

Of every good. And perfect gift. God. Is the giver. Every good. And perfect gift. That you and I have. He has permitted us.

To have. And every good. And perfect gift. That your neighbour has. That you don't have. God has permitted them. To have. God. So when you look at it.

And I look at these things. And I look at my lack. And I feel. A sense of outrage. Often it's directed. Towards the neighbour. But actually. Heart level.

Is directed. Against God. God. We're not saying. Thank you. For what I have. We're shaking our fists. And saying. Why do I not have more? God. 1 Timothy 6.

[17:25] 6. Says that. Godliness. Brings. Contentment. Godliness. With contentment. The two go together. Is great gain. Envy.

James reminds us of here. Finds. Its source. In the devil. And if. Envy is a problem. It's a problem. That we have.

With God. There's bitter ending. The second thing here. As what's identified by James.

Is selfish ambition. One of the commentators says. He defines selfish ambition. As to use.

Unworthy. And divisive means. For promoting. One's own.

Interest. Selfish ambition. Is to use. Unworthy. And divisive means. For promoting. One's own. Interests.

[18:19] And we see that. Everywhere. Now that's. Almost an accepted thing. Within the world. That we live in. We see it in the football pitch.

Any tactics. Cheating. Employ them. As long as you can get ahead. And your team will win. We see it in the boardroom.

Any means. Employed to. To get maximum profit. To get me up the ladder. To. To. Promotion. It's the me first mentality. Selfish ambition.

And these are two. Spiritual problems. That. Are characteristic. Of. Of the world. And. Of the prince of this world. The devil. But.

The christian. Verse 14. Is not to harbor. These things. Now. I've. Said this before. I think. I've used this illustration.

[19:18] Before. We're well familiar. With the whole. The whole idea. Of harbors. And things coming in. To harbors. If. An aggressive ship. With dangerous cargo.

Was. What was seeking to harbor. And harbors. Or. Or scalping. Farah. And. Kunna. And various other people. Would do everything. That they possibly could. To make sure.

These ships. And that cargo. Find no place here. But they're driven away. And James. Is saying to us. Look in your hearts.

And we pray tonight. As we come under the authority. Of God's word. That God the Holy Spirit. He will show us. In a measure that we can bear. That he'll show us our hearts.

And if we see these things approaching. If we see the beginnings. Of ending. If we see that. Selfish ambition. That. That comes. And if we see that approaching.

[20:18] And even docking. Or even lodged within our hearts. What are we to do? Well verse 14. Makes clear. We're not to boast about it. As if it's a good thing.

We're not to deny it. As if it wasn't there. So what are we to do? We're to repent of it. These are. Ships. Ships. That are not from heaven. These are ships. That come from hell. These are cargoes. That are not from God. They're from the devil. And if you and I harbor. If we accommodate. If we tolerate.

Envy. Selfish ambition. In our hearts. In our circles. In our fellowship. Then we will.

[21:16] Verse 16. Be sure to find. A disorder. And then we will practice. And the word for. For a disorder. There in the Greek. Is the same word.

That can be. Translated as confusion. Confusion. And that's true. And we know that. I think. The patricians. Because.

We have all. At times. In our lives. Struggled with envy. And I don't think. There's. Often. Very many weeks. That we can go. Without struggling. To some degree.

With envy. Whether it's. The possessions. That our neighbor has. Or the reputation. Or the car. Or the house. Or whatever. We can struggle.

With these things. But if we. Accommodate envy. If we. Accommodate. Selfish ambition. There is an inner. Terminal. There is a heart.

[22:12] Confusion. Because a Christian. Should not. Accommodate these things. And the Holy Spirit. Who lives in us. Makes that clear.

There's a confusion. At the inner level. And there's a confusion. At the public. Outer level. As well. Because. The world. Knows. That Christians. Ambassadors.

For Christ. Those who profess. To know. And love. And trust. Jesus. Should not. Be dominated. By these things. So the application.

Here is. It's challenging. But it's not hard. To understand. We ask God. The spirit. To search our hearts. We ask him.

To show us. The bitter. Entry. The selfish ambition. That may be there. And if it's there. We repent. And day by day.

[ 23 : 10 ] Week by week. Month by month. Year by year. For as long as. We are in time. We keep repenting. Of such worldly. Wisdom.

So that's the first point. There's a worldly wisdom. To keep. Repenting of. We repent. And we believe. On the day that we trust Christ.

And then we repent. And we believe. Every day afterwards. Until we get to heaven. So there's a. Worldly wisdom.

That we're to keep. Repenting of it. And secondly. And finally. There's a heavenly wisdom. To keep receiving. Look at verse 17. And I'm really just going to. Read through this. And make a comment or two.

As we come to. To a conclusion. The wisdom that comes from heaven. Is first of all pure. Then peace loving. Considerate.

[ 24 : 06 ] Submissive. Full of mercy. And good fruit. Impartial. And sincere. Peacemakers. Who sow in peace. Raise a harvest. Of righteousness.

So here we have. A picture. Of the heavenly wisdom. That we're to keep receiving. There's the worldly wisdom. We're given a picture of it. We're to repent of it.

Day after day after day. And there's the heavenly wisdom. That we're to keep receiving. What does it look like? Well. First of all. It's pure. And the word that's used there.

It's the same word for. For holy. It's free from fault. It's without deficiency. It's devoid of anything. That's sinful. Worldly wisdom.

It's pure. And secondly. It's peace loving. Sometimes we encounter people. And we. We might say.

[ 25 : 02 ] Well. You know. He's a right wise guy. We never mean that as a compliment. You know. He's a right smart. Always got an answer. Always got a clip.

And someone. Who has that. Kind of persona. Someone who. Who always seems to know it all. And is always ready. To put you down. And lift themselves up. They stir up trouble.

Wherever they go. Well. Heavenly wisdom. Is. First of all. Pure. And secondly. It's peace loving.

It's. You know. It's the opposite. Of being a wise man. It's the opposite. Of being a smart aleck. One commentaire says.

God's wisdom. Loves peace. And spreads you everywhere. It operates. The. Heavenly wisdom. Is pure.

[ 25 : 58 ] It's peace loving. Thirdly. It's considerate. But it's. It's gentle. It's one of these words. That's quite hard. To translate. In the. In the Greek.

It's the same. Word. That's used. For. For being courteous. Or. Forbearing. Long suffer. What heavenly wisdom. Looks like. Not snapping.

Not jumping. Down people's throats. Considerate. Not abrasive. Not hard. Gentle. Fourthly.

It's submissive. And the. The word. That's used there. Is. It's the opposite. Of self-seeking.

Remember hearing.

A story. About a wee boy. Who was in a. In a cafe. With his mum. He was maybe. Just pure. Three years old. And three years old. Just. Able to speak. And no more. And there's a battle.

[ 26 : 54 ] Going on. In this restaurant. Between the wee boy. And his parents. He's in the chair. And. It's one of these high chairs. But he. He wasn't strapped down. And he was desperate.

To try and get out. With this thing. And his mum said. Sit down. No. I don't want to sit down. Sit down. No. I don't want to sit down. I want to get out. Sit down.

And eventually. She said. You don't sit down. You're getting strapped in. He tried to get out again.

He was strapped in. And he was clunked in. To this seat. Tied up. With the sausage and the chips. In front of him.

And the wee boy. Was said to have remarked. I might be sitting down. On the outside. But I'm standing up. On the inside. Absolutely not.

Submissive. Somebody was speaking to me today. About. Various members. Within the family.

Now. One who's. Very submissive.

[ 27 : 52 ] One. One who's always. Kind of protesting. Always wrestling. Heavenly wisdom. It's. It's. It's not self-seeking.

It's not. Unreasonable. It's submissive. All we're ready to yield. To others. It's full of mercy. And good fruit.

And. We can. Go back to verse 12. And go back further. And. James has spoken about that.

Already. We can go back to. To John 15. And think about the. The fruit of.

Of those who know Christ. If we know Christ. There should be fruit. Jesus said. By their fruit. You'll know them. Heavenly wisdom.

It's impartial. Shows no favoritism. We just need to go back to. To chapter 2. And James expounds that at length. It's sincere.

[ 28 : 47 ] Literally. It's. Without hypocrisy. It's not crooked. Not. It's not. Like someone. Who wears a mask.

And who has one face. For one day. And another face. For another day. Sincere. Consistent. And that's the heavenly wisdom.

That James speaks of. That we're to keep on receiving. First of all. Pure. Then peace loving.

Considerate. Submissive. Full of mercy.

And good fruit. Impartial. And sincere. That's the sketch. That James gives us. Of heavenly wisdom.

Now we have a.

A couple of. A couple of. Artists. In the congregation. I'm no artist. But. It's always fascinating. To watch an artist at work. Because at first.

[ 29 : 47 ] It just makes no sense. Now we look. And we see a canvas. There's a few lines here. And a few lines there. And we're trying to. Decipher that. And you can't make out. Much.

But then as the lines. Become. Fuller. And as the shades. Start to come in. And the colours. And the textures. Are added. We begin to recognise. The picture. The portrait.

Of the one. Who's been. Painted. And as James. Paints. With words. Here. There's one. Word. In this.

Heavenly wisdom. It is layered. On top. Of another. And brought together. Who do we see? Who do we see here? Who is pure.

Sinless. Peace loving. Considerate. Full of mercy. And good food.

[ 30 : 46 ] Impartial. And sincere. That's you. Put your hand up. It's none of us.

This portrait. In the perfect sense. Only fits one person. It's Christ. He was the wisdom.

That came down from heaven. He is the image. Of the invisible God. He is the only one. Ever. Who lived a pure.

Perfect. Sinless. Life. He is the prince of peace. And as his birth was announced. That was the song.

That came from the angels. A song of joy. And a song of peace. The prince of peace. Is the life. He is the one.

[ 31 : 45 ] Who is utterly. Conspire. Think about Jesus. In the garden. Of Getsemane. As the guards. Come with their swords. To arrest him.

And to abuse him. And to inflict. Such suffering. And yet. Jesus concern. In that garden. Is to say. You want me. Let these disciples.

That I love. Let them go. In the upper room. Knowing all that was to follow. He is washing the feet. Of the disciples. This is. Considerate. To a degree. That we have never known. Think about how submissive he was.

Before his accusers. As we thought about this morning. How submissive he was. When he had all the power. Of heaven.

[ 32 : 45 ] To draw on. And yet. He stands submissively. Before. His attackers. As he worked out our salvation. Think about.

How. In the garden. As he prayed. And the sweat. Like blood. Dropped from his forehead. He said. He said. This cup. Can pass. But not. My love. Father.

You're what we've done. And as we look to the cross. Which. Is where we're going. We see the. The vastness. Of the mercy.

Of Christ. And as we look to him. And to his grace. And to his gospel. We think.

About how sincerely. And how impartially. He calls. On all the world. To believe in him. And to come to him.

[ 33 : 39 ] So as James paints. This picture. Of heavenly wisdom. We see Jesus. We see Jesus.

And tonight. If you are here. And you are not yet. A Christian. You need Jesus. Whether you're.

In primary school. Whether you're. In secondary school. Whether we're older. Working. Retired. If we have never.

Trusted. Yet we need Jesus. There is a heaven. To gain. There is a forgiveness. Of sin. That he offers. Or there is a heaven.

To shun. If we want. To be saved. And we must be saved. We need Jesus. Salvation.

[ 34 : 44 ] In no other name. We need Jesus. And if we are saved. But we want to be wise.

As we must be. If we want to be. If we want to be sanctified. As we are called to be. Day by day. We need Jesus.

Day by day. We repent. Of the worldly wisdom. That we see approaching. Looking for harbour. Within our hearts. And day by day. We come.

And day by day. We come. To know. And to be with. And to receive. The heavenly wisdom. That is imparted to us.

As we walk with the Lord. With the manna that fell from heaven. Every day. It fell. And wisdom.

[ 35 : 47 ] And grace. And strength. To be able to live. In a way. That is glorifying to God. It falls. In daily packages.

From heaven. And we receive them. As we open God's word. As we pray. In order to come. To and be with.

Jesus. God. Worldly wisdom. Bitter enemy. Selfish ambition.

We see it. Day by day. We repent of it. Heavenly wisdom. That we see perfectly. In Christ. That we are to keep receiving.

As we trust. And if we live that way. This year. 2018. And every year. That we are given. In this world.

[ 36 : 47 ] Will be fruitful. And we will be lived. For God's glory. Peacemakers. Worshiping. To sow in peace. Raise a harvest. Of righteousness.

That's it, for us. And that's it here.ski.