

Bible Study Monday 2nd November

James

By definition a church community is made up of sinners, and is not a model community of perfect humans. James was a “pastor” and he writes with great love on how we should strive to behave; not, as some hard liners tell us, because we are redeemed and saved; but, and this is what I believe, because we are people made in the image of God. What do you believe?

James was Jesus’ brother, we presume he was converted after the resurrection and then went on to be the leader of the Jerusalem church. Paul reported back to him after each of his three missionary journeys.

Scholars think James was a devout Jew, keen to keep the Jewish law who became a Christian and then was equally keen to keep the Christian law, see James 1.25; James 2.8-13; James 4.11-12. He did this because Jesus was the fulfilment of the law Matthew 5.17.

Before we dive into the text proper, we should look at how James’s writings echo the words of, firstly, John the Baptist, and then secondly those of Mary and finally those of Jesus himself:

John the Baptist

Luke 3.10-11 – give shirts and food – James 2.15-17

Mary

Luke 1.51-53 – proud down, lowly up – James 4.5-6

Jesus

Matt.5.33-37 – don’t vow or swear – James 5.12

Matt.6.19-21 – don’t store up riches – James 5.2-3

Matt.7.1-2 – don't judge others – James 2.13

Matt.7.15-18 – good bush/good fruit – James 3.11-12

Matt.18.1-5 – humble is best – James 1.9-10

But he also has a lot of other things to say; all pertinent to how we behave inside a Christian community.

1. **Prejudice**; James 2.1-13. Do you have a natural tendency to play up to social superiors? Do you see some people not up to your intellectual, well mannered class? James's advice is to try to think of us all as made in God's image James 3.9.
2. **Faith and Actions**; James 2.14-26. James believes that our faith is 'proved' and developed as we act on it. As a pastor James looks for behavioural signs when members of his church claim "faith". But as a prophet, James asks can the secular world see the faith of today's spirit filled body i.e. the church James 2.26.
3. **Our Tongues**; James 3.1-12. Consider for a moment just verses 9-10, with one careless remark we can undo years of patient building of trust; destroy relationships; set off incorrect rumours. None of which were intended, it was just careless talk. Do you agree with him when he says in v2 that if you can control your own tongue you can control your whole self?
4. **Choosing God's Way**; James 4.1-17. As a pastor James has "seen it all" as he records in these verses. Do you want and pray for the wrong things vv1-3? do you judge others vv11-12?, do you plan as if you are someone important vv13-17?
5. **Be Patient**; James 5.7-11. As a prophet James knows he has not "seen it all", there is more to come. Note he is specific, be patient until Jesus returns, not, be patient until you get what you want. Two very different time scales and attitudes.

How are you on patience? To finish off read Habakkuk 3.17-18.

Next Time Habakkuk, then it is Advent.