

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Theme: "The Testing of Your Faith"

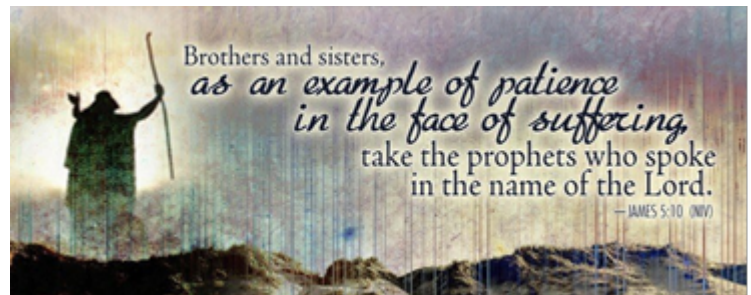
Lesson: 36 Text: 5:10-12

Date: 12-3-23

Trinity Lutheran Church Pastor David

Nehrenz

www.tlcnorman.org



TEXT AND STUDY NOTES

(10) As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke **in the name of the Lord**.

(11) Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast.

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen **the purpose of the Lord**, how **the Lord is compassionate and merciful**.

(Ex 34:6; Nu 14:18; 2 Chr 36:16;
Job 1:20-22; 2:9,10; 3; 12:1-3; 13:15; 16:1-3; 21:4;
Ps 103:8;
Mt 5:10-12; 23:34; Ac 7:52; Heb 10:36; 11:32-38)

(12) But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either **by heaven** or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

(Lev 19:12;
Mt 5:33-37; 23:16-22)

Commentary on James – "The Epistle of Faith" – Dr. David Scaer - CPH

"Behold, the Judge is standing at the doors" reflects Jesus' use of the word "doors" in connection with His final coming: "So also, when you see all these things, you know that He [the Son of Man] is near (*eggus*), at the very gates (*thurais*)" (Matt. 24:33). The RSV translation of the same Greek word in Matthew as "gates" and in James as "doors" makes it difficult to see from the English translation that James is developing a saying of Jesus used in connection with the lesson from the fig tree (Matt. 24:32). The idea of Jesus standing at the gates or doors means that He is now ready to enter into the world to exercise judgment. The imminent return of Jesus is a motivation not only for patience but also for refraining from exercising the judgment which belongs to Him alone. Behind the idea of Jesus' standing at the gates is Ps. 24:7-10, the traditional psalm for the Advent season, where the King of glory, the Lord of hosts, waits for the proper time to enter.

The examples of the suffering prophets are offered as further inducement for patience under persecution:

As an example of suffering (*kakopatheias*) and patience (*makrothumias*), brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call those happy (*makarizomen*) who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose (*to telos*) of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful (*polusplagchnos estin ho kurios kai oiktirmōn*) (vv. 10-11).

For “patience” (KJV, v. 11) James does not use *makrothumia*, the divine quality of waiting for the performance of the plan of salvation, but *hupomonē*, persistence in spite of unfavorable environment. Job is held up as an example for several reasons: the length of his suffering, his complaining, and the relief which God finally brought him. Their severe affliction should not be interpreted as a sign of disfavor, but to the contrary, their affliction, even if it brought them to the brink of despair, was a sign they were the successors to the prophets in proclaiming the message of salvation and that God would bring them relief. Some commentators have noticed the absence of Jesus as an example of suffering. It would be inappropriate to mention Jesus as an example, since He, unlike Job and Elijah, did not complain.⁸

If Luther along with others failed to see the Gospel as central in James, it may have been because he was not aware that James, with the early church, commonly called Jesus “Lord.” For James “the Lord is compassionate and merciful,” terms carrying the message of divine assistance in human distress. The Greek word for “compassionate,” *polusplagchnos*, means the internal churning of the organs at the sight of suffering. In the Benedictus God is said to be full of such visceral mercy (Luke 1:78). Jesus looking at the shepherdless crowd is said to be “moved with compassion (*esplagchnisthē*)” (Matt. 9:36 KJV) and out of such mercy establishes the pastoral office in conjunction with His apostles (Matt. 10:1). In the parable of the unforgiving steward such mercy is the quality of the lord who forgives the unpayable debt (Matt. 18:27). And it is the attitude of the good Samaritan who aids the stricken traveler (Luke 10:33). The Greek word for “merciful,” *oiktirmos*, suggests that mercy which is moved to tears. Luther’s statement, “But this

For Christians in their tribulations James does not present Jesus as a divine detached, punishing Judge, but Jesus whose very essence is so touched by the suffering of His church that He is willing and ready to relieve it. “You have seen the purpose of the Lord” points to what God was accomplishing with Job. The Book of Job ends with the optimistic note that God relieved him out of his sufferings. His trials were transitory. Job does not face eternal despair. There might have been still one more reason for choosing Job as an example. Both Job and the addressees of James’ epistle are beset by Satan to the point of doubting God’s plan. They, like Job, will be rewarded at the end of their trials.

similar to the Sermon on the Mount. It is an abbreviated variation of the following section from the Sermon:

Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.” But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is His footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply “Yes” or “No”; anything more than this comes from evil [or “the evil one”] (Matt. 5:33-37).

James’ readers were making their future plans and asking God’s judgment on themselves if they failed to accomplish them. Here the circumstances would be similar to those of the Sermon. In the Sermon Jesus finds the taking of oaths concerning future actions to be inspired by Satan (*ek tou ponērou*), because such an oath asserts man’s free control of the future and denies God’s continuing role as Creator. James warns of the eschatological danger. Calling upon God as the Judge over future matters which no man can control is dangerous. This section on oaths concerning the future seems to be related to 4:13-16, where plans are made without any awareness that God ultimately controls all things.

LIFE APPLICATION

“Those blessed who remained steadfast.

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.”

Since the Lord has been merciful to us,

what are the ways we are merciful to others and remain steadfast in the purposes of the Lord?