

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

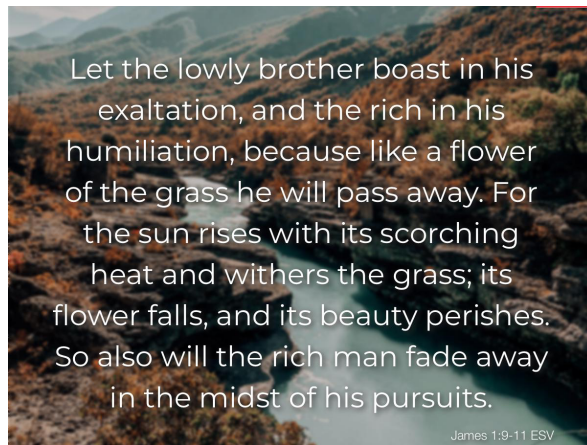
Theme: “The Testing of Your Faith”

Lesson: 4 Text: 1:9-12 Date: 2-12-23

Trinity Lutheran Church

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TEXT AND STUDY NOTES

(9) Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation,

(10) and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.

(11) For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

(Job 14:2; Ps 102:4,11; 103:15,16; Is 40:6-8;

Mt 19:23-26; 20:12; 23:12; Lk 1:46-55; 1 Cor 7:31; 1 Pet 1:24)

(12) Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial,

for when he has stood the test he will receive

the crown of life, which **God** has promised to those who love him.

(Gen 22:1; Ex 20:6; Ps 1:1; Jer 17:7-8; Dan 12:12; Mt 5:3-12; 10:22;

1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; 9:25; 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 3:14; 5:4; Rev 1:3; 2:10; 3:11,19)

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

Among the synoptic gospels only Matthew contains the self-designation of Jesus as humble or lowly (*tapeinos*), “I am gentle and *lowly* in heart” (Matt. 11:29). The verb form is used in Paul’s great hymn to Christ’s humiliation and exaltation, “He humbled (*etapeinōsen*) Himself and became obedient unto death” (Phil. 2:8).¹ The words of Jesus, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles (*tapeinōsei*) himself will be exalted” in Matt. 23:12 reflect the same combination of humility and exaltation as does James 1:9. “Let the lowly (*tapeinos*) brother boast in his exaltation.” Though the words of Jesus in Matthew about humbling and exalting are intended as guides for the Christian, especially during times of duress, both passages embrace a well-formulated Christology. Jesus was the One who humbled Himself by crucifixion so that God could exalt Him by resurrection. His humiliation becomes model and motivation, especially for

the rich in the congregation. The words, “Let . . . the rich [boast] in his humiliation” silhouette the humiliation of Jesus. Paul uses the same theme in describing Christ’s humiliation: “Though He [Jesus] was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). James’ urging the poor to boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation takes its formative shape against a Christology made more explicit by Paul, but implicitly present in his own writing. James thus links the teaching of Jesus and the preaching of Paul. Understanding James’ terminology as being Christologically freighted thus rescues this epistle from the common opinion which consigns it to a type of moralistic, rabbinic literature.

A Brief Exegetical Digression: James’ Use of Isaiah 40 (1:10-11)

Is. 40:6-8 is quoted in near completeness in 1 Peter 1:24-25 and partially in James 1:10-11. It appears that Isaiah 40 belonged to those collections of the Old Testament Scriptures of which the early Christians made frequent use,² as Is. 40:3 is used in all four gospels to introduce John as the forerunner of Christ (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23). The sections of Isaiah 40 quoted in the gospels have to do with introduction of the voice and with that voice’s authority from God. Is. 40:6-8, the message of the voice who comes speaking in God’s stead, is quoted only in 1 Peter 1:24-25, and only an allusion is found in James 1:10-11. The voice’s message from Isaiah is not quoted in any of the gospels. The uses to which the passage is put in 1 Peter and in James differ from each other, but their meanings are complementary. The emphasis in the Petrine passage is rebirth through the Word of God, which is immune to perishing. In James the same passage from Isaiah is used to indicate the transitoriness of human existence. James later discusses regeneration (1:18), as he continues to use the agricultural imagery with his reference to the firstfruits. While James stresses the preparatory repentance

The style here is not unlike that of Psalm 1, which speaks about those who continue in God’s Word and thus have no need to fear God’s judgment and about those who have disregarded that Word and must face that judgment. They are penalized by disappearing like the chaff. In Old Testament theology eschatology is presented in agricultural terms. John the Baptist takes advantage of these images and portrays Jesus the eschatological Judge as a farmer sweeping clean his barn floor to divide the wheat from the chaff (Matt. 3:12). In the parable of the sower the agricultural imagery persists. The seed whose plant is destroyed by the scorching sun represents those who believe and then fall away when faced with persecution (Matt. 13:5-6, 20-21). James

LIFE APPLICATION

“Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation,
and the rich in his humiliation,
because like a flower of the grass he will pass away”
What is the point of this comparison?