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September Survey Pt. 3
“Preparing for the Harvest”

A Harvest of Righteousness.

READ James 3:13-4:8

What gives James the authority to speak to us about this - who is he?

-James is an apostle, moreover he is the brother of Jesus.
-he was the leader of the church in Jerusalem

-If the early churches had these troubles in this passage, you can be sure they'll show up among us too.

Look at Verse 18 with me again: ¹⁸ *Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*

Peacemakers –

The title “Peacemakers” reveals the title God has given us that we should be proud to embrace
-this isn’t just a select group of people in the church, this isn’t just the teachers James was writing to earlier on

– it is for everyone who aspires to live wisely – absolutely for the leaders in the church, but the scriptures are clear that everyone is called to live by God’s wisdom

We talked last week about some characteristics of wisdom in *Psalms 19*:

To be wise means we **know the truth about God as revealed in creation and scripture**

-We were also reminded by the Spirit that we cannot simply give lip-service to God, but our **declarations and praise must be genuine**, reflecting real trust in God

James also gives us characteristics or “marks” of wisdom that should be recognizable in our lives:

These include:

- being peaceable and gentle, being willing to yield, showing mercy, refraining from showing favouritism, and avoiding hypocrisy at all costs.
- James’ famous line sums up the wise life: "Submit to God"

-sometimes Christians ignore the full picture of wisdom - some people get stuck on the "knowing and declaring of Psalm 19 – they get wound up in doctrine and theology so tight that they are unable to reach out and **act like Jesus**,
- they become pious little pharisees.

Other Christians have the **opposite** problem

– they become so preoccupied with serving the last, the least, and the lost that they abandon their first love (as Rev. 2:4 says) –
-they fail to worship God and merely “work”

- we have to let the way of wisdom become “second nature” to us, and replace the “first nature” of selfishness and pride.

“Who Sow in Peace...”

Speaking of these “2 natures” there are two kinds of wisdom that correspond to them.

-both are "shrewd" - making smart decisions to lead to a big harvest – but what is harvested is completely different.

The first nature, what we come to go with, is our rebellious nature, we are born into a state of tainted nature

– we have good gifts, we are made in a good image, but we come from a long line of rebels, and we bring that rebellious nature with us.

This is what James calls “bad wisdom” in Verse 15

1. Bad wisdom – is all about selfish ambition

-the philosophy is that the end justifies the means (lying, arrogant, my way or the highway)

- this is what James calls “earthly and natural” (in other words humanity rebelling against God, its dead spiritually, the opposite of heavenly, only working with our fleshly powers)

-its actually more than that though... its **demonic** (joining the forces of evil Powers – when we rebel against God, we are not operating only in our own power – we are throwing our lot in with the Devil himself)

- evil wisdom gets things done, but in a way that sooner or later destroys both the person and the people around them and produces a harvest of evil.

-like the say goes – garbage in, garbage out.

We are called to be “new creations” who live according to **good wisdom**:

Our lives should be marked by what V. 17 says:

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

In v. 13 James puts it simply: we are to show **wisdom** through **humble** good works (honour to God, care for the poor, love for the neighbour) – It’s not so much about the point that real faith produces works here, but that a person who is actually Wise will show it through their humility in good works.

The importance of humility runs all throughout the Bible:

It goes back to the pinnacle of Hebrew examples - Moses himself –:

- when Moses is being criticized and attacked by his own closest loved ones who want power and authority the Bible comments - "now the man Moses was very humble, moreso than anyone else on the face of the Earth (Numbers 12:3) - Jesus, too is described as Humble at least 3 times.

The implication here is that **humility or meekness is "non-retaliation in the face of criticism."** Wise teachers are not retaliatory; they know full well the temptation to respond harshness, *with equal or greater venom*, but they remain **restrained**.

“Reap a harvest of righteousness”

-when you live a life as a peacemaker, the humble deeds you do, are the seeds you sow in peace (v.18). Your deeds are your seeds.

God provides the growth into righteousness – which can also be described as “all things put in order” – God’s order, that is.

-Living for yourself on the other hand, leads to no harvest – a famine

But here’s the good news for everyone - God actually opens up the door for MORE GRACE. James says “but God give MORE GRACE” in 4:6 – even when you have sown selfishness and have no harvest to reap, God has more grace – he opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble – anyone can humble themselves before God, at any time. **It is not to late for you or for anyone to choose humility, to choose wisdom, to choose the way of Jesus.**

A final word of hope James offers in v.8: “Draw Near to God! And He will draw near to you!”