

James 3: 13-18

When I find myself getting frustrated over little things like getting my glasses in or out of my pocket:

When I find myself complaining about simple annoyances like getting my pants on after hip surgery:

When I find myself in traffic behind a driver who is reading something on the seat beside him and not concentrating on the road:

When I find myself muttering, ***“Why can’t people just do their job, or follow the rules, or get out of my way!”***

When I’m like that I’m not getting along in life, and who would want to get along with me.

When we find ourselves irritated with people and situations;

When we get cranky or judgemental;

When things just don’t want to work out the way we want or expect them to work out;

When we start feeling sorry for ourselves or entitled to something better, we are far from the Wisdom of God!

We are not living well.

We are not living wisely.

We are not living humbly.

When we hear ourselves complaining, ***“Why is this happening to me?”*** We are taking everything personally and feeling that everything or everyone is against us. And we begin to act accordingly. Pride and entitlement join forces with judgement. It is not a pretty picture!

Now friends, one universal spiritual insight that is very difficult to grasp is this: **All experiences are impersonal.** The situation or event just ***‘is what it is’***. I know many folk have resisted this insight in the past few years, but I think things are beginning to change. How we interpret our experiences is what personalizes the events of our lives. The attitude with which we engage what is going on around us makes a huge difference. As management guru **Peter Drucker** wisely counselled, ***“Never attribute to malice what can be explained by stupidity.”*** It stops personalized paranoia and emotional outbursts in their tracks.

What’s more, arguing with what has already happened and can’t be changed keeps us from creative engagement in the present. Things get worse since what we refuse to accept we are bound to repeat.

“It was what it was. Now what are we going to do?” Is the way forward!

Most people when they are being difficult or unkind to us are almost always caught up in their own mellow-dramas refusing to see things for what they really are. And if we call them in their behaviour, they usually have an excuse. They are having a bad day or something else and now we are supposed to feel sorry for them, for their being rude to us.

Doesn't this all sound a little crazy? Well, it is. Excessive self-referencing and arguing with what was, always leads one away from **Wisdom**.

In our epistle reading, **James** is addressing a cranky bunch of churches that are finding it hard to get along with one another. They are not a good advertisement for the **Jesus Way**; the **Wisdom of God**. We know this applies to individuals as well as to groups. So his first instructions are, ***"If you want to be wise, get off your high horse and calm down. Don't get so worked up about everything. Give people a break. It is just not all about you."***

Then he goes on the positive.

The **Wisdom of God** isn't based on aggression, rather it is *gentle*.

It isn't based on fear, rather it is *reasonable*. It is *even tempered*.

It isn't based on accusation, but on *mercy*.

It doesn't run hot and cold, but *brings blessings* at every opportunity.

What James doesn't say but we have come to know, **Wisdom** always starts with an *attitude of gratitude* and grows from there.

When I'm grateful for having a pair of glasses, I stop being frustrated.

When I'm grateful for the outcome of my surgery, I stop complaining.

When I'm grateful for the near miracle of modern transportation, I stop being judgemental.

When I'm grateful for the blessing of life together, I stop moaning or muttering.

You see life **'is what it is'**, it is not personal, it is wonderful!

Application for Today

Take your bulletin home. **Read** this scripture passage each day and take a few minutes to **reflect** on your inner attitude or your outer behaviours. And then **ask** yourself, ***"How am I doing as an advertisement for the Jesus Way of Wisdom?"*** Amen.

Sing: #10 MV Come and Seek the Ways of Wisdom

Mark 9: 30, 33-37

When it comes to advertising, everything that is being promoted is special. The old model use to be special but now it isn't. Last week's special isn't this week's

special. Special offers are always time limited. Scarcity goes hand in hand with being special. But notice the internal contradiction: there is no end of specials for they shift with every season, religious observance and cultural event. Every outfit it seems has a special up its sleeve: Special price, special product, special opportunity, special time of the year. It's no wonder we all want to be special too. Modern individualism has become being special. But this kind of being special is manufactured or claimed, not lived.

You see the shadow side of our individualism; our wanting to be special is the self-absorption of narcissism. So, in our increasingly narcissistic society, we all have to be special and we all secretly fear being average or normal. We quietly pray, ***“Please God, don't let me be average.”*** We tell our kids and our grands that they are special!!! However, when everyone is special, no one is special. When everyone becomes an exception then there is no longer the rule.

Now, there is a universal spiritual insight, which declares: **What is in the One is in the Whole.** In other words:

We are all connected. We are all in this together.

We are all part of a greater unity.

Being special is not the point. Special only serves to separate us. It gets its energy from ego insecurities. However with the spiritual life, it's about being connected that counts; plugged into the **Mystery** in the midst of all life. It is about being inclusive which draws us into the whole, the centre in ourselves and the centre of all things. The spiritual life is about living congruently with the truth of our connectedness, for the **Mystery** is within all of us. It is an ordinary life that can be lived extra ordinarily!

Today's **gospel reading** has that old familiar egotistical ring to it. Even before our modern individualism each of the disciples wants to be the special one! To be fair, it is hard not to want to be **the special one of the special One.** So, they are arguing.

“Who is the greatest? Who is more important? Who is the Right hand Man? Who is more that just an average follower of Jesus?”

When **Jesus** becomes aware of their self-involved argument, he creates a teaching moment.

He reminds them that we are all in this together.

He places a child in their midst and declares that position or importance isn't the point in **God's New Day.**

Unlike today, a child back then was not considered special; a child was not the centre of attention but ranked at the bottom of the family structure. Remember the

old attitudes; *'spare the rod and spoil the child'*, or *'children are to be seen but not heard'*. You get the picture.

So **Jesus** is saying: a child is simply a child. Being a child is what he or she has to offer. Likewise, an adult must be an adult and live the **Wisdom of God**. When we don't live wisely, we become childish instead of childlike. We still want to be special at other people's expense. Living the **Wisdom of God** is humbly accepting the knowledge that the **Mystery** is present within all of us.

We are more alike than we are different.

The same **Spirit** animates each of us.

We are all part of a greater unity.

What is in the one is in the whole.

Welcoming others is welcoming Jesus and welcoming what Wisdom is up to.

Adults being adult take this seriously.

Application for Today

Take your bulletin home. **Read** this scripture passage each day and take a few minutes to **reflect** on your inner attitude or your outer behaviours. And then **ask** yourself, *"Where can I let go of some of my self importance and humbly welcome what Wisdom is up to? What is or can be my role with the world-wide refugee situation"*

Amen.

Hymn: Voice United #603 In Loving Partnership We Come