

**JAMES RESHUFFLED, Price Tags**  
**June 3, 2018**



We're back in James for one last look in his mirror!  
It's been a tough mirror to look in,  
    A mirror that requires rigorously honest about our character defects  
And a willingness to ask God to remove those defects of character  
    no matter how much it hurts.

So are you brave of heart this morning?  
Let's take one more look.

**James 4:4-5** starts boldly,  
You adulterous people,  
don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God?  
Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world  
    becomes an enemy of God.  
Or do you think Scripture says without reason  
    that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?

So what in the world is friendship with the world?  
Back in my day we called that worldliness – and we knew exactly what it was!  
    Not wearing makeup and jewelry  
    Not going to dances  
    Not wearing fashionable clothes  
    Not going to movies  
    Not playing cards  
    And whatever you do . . .  
    Don't drink, don't chew and don't go with girls who do.  
*(The Catholics didn't seem to get as caught up in this as the Protestants did.)*  
*(Of course, the Protestants thought the Catholics were worldly.)*  
*(Perhaps the Catholics thought the Protestants were just weird.)*

I know that the people who thought conformity to these rules was essential  
    meant well,  
But it was absolutely NO protection against Biblical worldliness –  
    or being a friend of the world –  
    because it was never about the do's and don'ts.  
It has always been and still is about what the heart loves.

James is using the imagery of marriage.

When you marry, you forsake all others.

If you fail to do this, it's called adultery.

Can you imagine a couple that gets married,  
and a month later the husband tells his wife,

“I'm going out tonight with my old girlfriend”?

“I love you, but I'd still like to date her too.”

Someone's in big trouble!

God says, “You must choose.”

### **1 John 2:15-17**

Do not love the world or anything in the world.

If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.

For everything in the world—

the lust of the flesh, (*pleasures*)

the lust of the eyes, (*possessions*)

and the pride of life, (*loving feeling accomplished, admired, in command of life*)

comes not from the Father but from the world.

The world and its desires pass away,

but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

We will all enjoy the pleasures in this world that God grants us.

We will all have possessions that God entrusts to us.

We will all exercise the power and abilities God gives us in service to others.

It not *having* these things that makes us a friend of the world,

it's *loving* these things that gets us in trouble.

It's allowing them to be the basis for any of our decision making.

the goal of our pursuits.

It's when any of these things are given a higher price tag

than the pursuit of God.

**Worldliness is getting the price tags mixed up**

So here's what we're going to do today.

As we go to God's Word today, you're going to listen to what the Holy Spirit points out that is in competition with your love for God.

This will be no easy task,  
because instinctively and quickly we counter the still small voice of the Spirit  
with our justifications for why, after all, God approves of our decisions.  
We're so right in our own eyes that the fleeting glance in the mirror of God's Word  
disappears as quickly as it appeared.  
So, if you hear something from God,  
jot it down before it flies away.

So here we go. Let's see how James sets the price tags on . . .

## **PLEASURE OR SACRIFICE**

### **James 4:3**

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives,  
that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Many people see God as a way of getting ahead.  
They come to church because they realized they needed some help in life,  
and they're hoping God will work.  
Their commitment to God and to the church lasts as long as it serves their purpose  
of becoming more respectable in their eyes and the eyes of others,  
of getting their needs met for health, wealth, person betterment and success.

God is gentle with us in the beginnings.  
And in his mercy, he often comes through for us.  
But when things start getting better, we disappear.

**“Thanks God, I've got it from here.”**

If, however, things *don't* get better, maybe they even get worse, (*which often happens*)  
we say, **“I tried God and it didn't work.”**  
and we disappear.

What has become apparent is that our hearts are not consumed with the love for God,  
but rather with what we hoped we would get from God.

Here's an amazing case in point – a man named DEMAS,  
a co-worker of Paul mentioned three times in Paul's letters to the churches.  
He appears first in the closing salutation in Paul's letter to Philemon.

### **Philemon 23-24**

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings.  
And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

Then he is mentioned again in Colossians as a traveling companion who sends his greetings along with Luke.

But the mention that is so noteworthy is the last one, in **2 Timothy 4:9-10**

Paul urged Timothy to “give diligence to come shortly to me.”

The reason for the urgency being . . .

“for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica”

Perhaps in the beginnings, Demas got caught up in the excitement of a great missionary trip, serving with these powerful, committed servants of God.

He saw adventure, significance, personal esteem . . .

But when it began to feel more like *sacrifice*

He said to himself, “**This is *not* what he signed up for.**”

And he went back to the comforts and pleasures that this world can provide.

In the end, it became clear that he placed a higher price tag on comfort and pleasure than on service and sacrifice.

Here’s another price is right choice. . .

## **IMAGE OR INTEGRITY**

### **James 5:12**

Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simply “Yes” or “No.”

Otherwise you will be condemned.

In other words, simply tell the truth all the time.

So what does that have to do with image over character?

*Everything.*

In today’s world, the rule seems to be:

You can’t lie before a grand jury (BIG consequences if you’re caught)

But lying to the press?

Lying to your wife?

Lying to your boss?

Lying to your co-workers?

That’s not *illegal*, so it’s OK.

besides *EVERYBODY* does it.

You *have* to . . . to keep your image, your reputation, intact.

There was a day when a man's word was his bond.  
Or at least we still believed it *should* be  
and were *offended* if we caught someone in a blatant lie.  
Not so much today.

But James is saying, if you only tell the truth under oath  
then you are terribly short sighted.  
You may be able to manage people's perceptions with lies, (*for a while*)  
but you can't manage God.

Remember what Peter says to Ananias  
when he lied to Peter about the price he got from selling his property?  
"You have not lied to men, but to God."

God still thinks your word is your bond.  
He held Ananias accountable.  
He will hold you and me accountable.

So let your yes be yes and your no be no.  
Value preserving your integrity over preserving your image.

Shall we go on?

## **PRIDE OF LIFE OR FAITHFUL SERVICE**

### **James 5:13-16**

Now listen, you who say,

"Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there,  
carry on business and make money."

Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.

What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Instead, you ought to say,

"If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes.

All such boasting is evil.

There is a fascinating parable in Matthew 25 (Parable of the Talents)  
about a master who was going on a journey

Before he left he called three of his servants and entrusted them with some talents.  
Some suggest it was worth 20 years of salary, or let's say about a million dollars.

When the master returned,  
you'll remember, the man who had been given 5 talents went to work faithfully  
and gained 5 more.

The man who had been given 2 talents went to work faithfully and gained 2 more.

The third servant, however, gave God this excuse:

“Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and  
gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your  
talent in the ground.” (Matthew 25:24–25)

The 3rd servant has an inaccurate perception of God which becomes  
his excuse for not using his talent.

Why might he have this inaccurate perception?

Stop and think about it.

If you saw someone receive 5 talents, and the next person 2,  
And then you receive only 1,  
what do you feel?

That's not fair!!

I'm worthless by *comparison*.

No matter what I do I can never be as successful as \_\_\_\_\_  
I will never be as highly esteemed as \_\_\_\_\_

Let me bring it close to home . . .  
I will never have as big of a church as \_\_\_\_\_

New Beginnings has had pastors more gifted than me.  
And in the future New Beginnings will have more gifted pastors.

So, what shall I say?

Well, since I can't be as successful as \_\_\_\_\_, why try?  
Why should I give it all that I've got  
only to have less visible results to show for it than my counterparts.

I can blame God for being unfair and harsh, and just not serve,  
OR I can see my attitude for what it is – covetousness and pride.

BUT, consider . . .

Had the 3<sup>rd</sup> servant used his 1 talent, (which don't forget is still \$1,000,000) that servant would have received the exact same commendation from God as the first two.

'Well done, good and faithful servant!  
You have been faithful with a few things;  
I will put you in charge of many things.  
Come and share your master's happiness!'

Only one thing the master put a high price tag on . . . faithful service.

So will you, with me, put a higher price tag on faithful service than the pride of life?

One more . . .

## **POSSESSIONS OR GENEROSITY**

### **James 5:1-6**

You have hoarded wealth in the last days.  
Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields  
are crying out against you.  
The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.  
You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence.  
You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.  
You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

Hording comes from *my* fear of deprivation and poverty.  
But hording, God says, really means  
that someone *else* is living with deprivation and poverty  
and God holds you and me responsible.

There is this great Jewish tradition called the Havalah ceremony  
which is performed at the end of the Sabbath.

They put a cup on a tray  
and then fill the cup until it starts overflowing.  
It's a reminder that your wealth is not all about you.  
There are other people in this world who are in need,  
and it's our obligation as a people of faith to help fulfill their needs  
after you have taken care of our own.



Yes, we're allowed to fill our own cup.

God says that if you don't provide for your own family, you are worse than an infidel.

But, as people of faith – who see faith as a VERB,  
we can't stop there.

God only makes us *great*, so we can be *good* to those less fortunate.

Now we will have different ideas on how *big* our cup is allowed to be,  
but that's not our point today.

You decide that between you and God.

The point is, the overflow is not yours.

Do you have the price tags right?

Does the security you feel from accumulating possession and wealth  
get a higher price tag than generosity?

So there we have it.

- **PLEASURE OR SACRIFICE**
- **IMAGE OR INTEGRITY**
- **PRIDE OF LIFE OR FAITHFUL SERVICE**
- **POSSESSIONS OR GENEROSITY**

How did you do on this game of the price is right?

Only this game has eternal consequences.

If you were listening to the Spirit of the Lord today,

He will have brought at least one thing to your mind  
that stands in competition with your love for him.

I hope you wrote it down,

And as you come to the table today, lay it down before the Lord in your heart.

May this be our heart song . . .

Lord you are more precious than silver.

Lord, you are more precious than gold.

Lord, you are more costly than diamonds,

And nothing I desire compares with you.