

James 4:1-6

1 Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? 2 You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, "God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? 6 But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (NRSV).

Today's Scripture addresses several things: conflict, desire, indwelling of the spirit, humility, and the overall fundamental problem of faithlessness in the community. One thing that we see in the Scripture is that lack of faith is not just a modern problem.

We addressed conflict some last week. Conflict is prevalent in the Bible and most of the letters of the New Testament deal with some form of conflict. The Bible is about the relationship between God and humanity. Within this relationship the will of humanity contrasts with the will of God. Today's Scripture gives us one aspect where conflict comes from - desire - humans desire things of the earth. James examines the causes and effects of divisions within the community as the body of Christ and the internal conflict within individual as people wrestle with righteousness and their own personal cravings. The will of humanity contrasting with the will of God starts with Adam and Eve. The serpent tricked humanity and created desire within them. These were not bad people. These were good people that were tricked into temptation. I believe that the root of most conflict is not due to bad people. It is good people that have been tricked and end up out of focus with the will of God and sidetracked by desire and temptation.

The lesson today is on humility. Whereas, God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. I think the best example of humility is Jesus. If you ever need a Bible example for anything look at Jesus. If you ever need direction in life look at Jesus. He is humble, strong, and steadfast in faith in the face of danger. Jesus had the power to build an army and conquer. He had the power and ability to be a warrior king. The people wanted a great warrior to free them from the Romans and they wanted to make him a great king like David. God gave them a humble servant, a man of peace and love. When he made the triumphant entry into Jerusalem people celebrated and shouted acclamations that were so great that he got complaints. The religious leaders complained when they should have been celebrating. I find it to be quite ironic that instead of celebrating they complained about the celebration. I want you to notice something. Notice in the Bible which side of righteousness the complaints fall on. In the Bible complaints always fall on the wrong side of righteousness. All complaints go against God, or Jesus, a prophet, the Apostle Paul, Moses, or other Bible heroes. All complaints are on the wrong side of righteousness.

Within the writing of James conflict is addressed within a lesson on humility. James is at the fundamental root of the problem. People are absorbed with their own desire. When they are focused on their own way they are not focused on God's way. Conflict comes when we lack humility, when we do not get what we want, when we are tricked by temptation and fall into the

trappings of desire. When we focus on the self we are not focused on the will of God or the teachings of Jesus.

Today's Scripture also provides another lesson on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Scripture uses strong language "God yearns jealously." God craves anxiously for the spirit to dwell within us. I do not question the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, it is here and other places in the Bible. God longs for the spirit that God he has made to dwell in us. God wants the Holy Spirit to be in you and me. We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. You, as a Christian, as a child of God, have the spirit in you. God wants you to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, there is no conflict; there are no complaints, because the focus is Jesus and the will of God. Conflict comes when you are tricked by temptation and desire the things of the world. Conflict comes when your will contrasts the will of God.

God sends us love and we nail it to the cross. God sends us love we should love it, cherish it, worship it, and praise it, but we nail it to the cross. All Christians should always focus on the divine. People rejected Jesus because they were not focused on the will of God.

I see James being applicable to our world today. James sees an ethical dualism where there are two measures for human behavior; the measure of God and the measure of the world that goes against God. You are in one camp or the other. It is clear, black and white, with no gray area; you are either in with God or out of touch from the will of God. Conflict comes when human attitudes and behavior are not shaped by the words of Jesus. Conflict exists within the person who wants both to confess commitment to God and contradict it in action. The lesson for today is summed up in that one sentence. I'll repeat it for emphasis. Conflict exists within the person who wants both to confess commitment to God and contradict it in action. James encourages us to act according to our conviction. Always focus on the teachings of Jesus and God who gives grace to the humble.