

June 2, 2019

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "From Where Are You Influenced?"

—Come Close to God—

Text: James 4:1~3

4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

4:2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.

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.

Introduction

We continue to study the Epistle of James and we are surprised by its content that is still applicable to the present day. For example, James deals with the subject of making mistakes with the words. He teaches the power of the words and advises not to make the mistake with using them.

Last month (May 15th), the Liberal Democratic Party, the biggest party in Japan, delivered a **manual** to prevent a slip of the tongue beforehand an upper house election in this summer. It seemed to brace their nervous one more time and increase their individual awareness because of the inappropriate comments of Deputy Land Minister Ichiro Tsukada and the Olympics Minister Yoshitaka Sakurada.

The contents of the manual are:

- ① To control remarks based on the place and situation
- ② To use simple sentences and prune a conversation of unnecessary expressions.
- ③ Not to make insensitive remarks about personal views such as historical understanding and gender, and also remarks that lack of concern about an accident and a disaster.

A certain veteran member of the Liberal Democratic Party said, "It is regrettable that the

quality of our members became worse and we should have to make a manual.” However, this is a real situation in Japan.

My friends. The epistle was written 2000 years ago. Nevertheless, we find that various problems are just the same in our newspaper and T.V. programs. Concerning words, we are able to create conflicts, fights, desires, pleasures and so on.

It is not the first time that the Bible refers to this. Human beings also made various laws (clauses, rules) to deal with this real situation. However, the laws that humans made are so imperfect that they need to be revised according to the times.

In fact, I realize again that the Bible is God’s law that is valid over the generations and is also applicable to all people. It is the Bible that teaches us the correct way to live.

Let’s consider our lives today.

Main Points

1. The Cause of Fights

1) The Root of the Problem

The Roman Empire controlled the region when James wrote the epistle. Judea, his country, was remarkably similar to our society. Both societies can be characterized as peaceful and prosperous. It is true that there are wars and poverty throughout the world. However, when we compare the present with the situation of World War II, it is the difference between heaven and earth.

Like this, the days of James were peaceful. Peace and abundance are wonderful; however, we think it natural and are apt to forget to give thanks to God. Eventually, we don’t fear God and lose the humble mind.

It was like this in the days of James and it is the same in our society.

People are caught by the worldly things rather than God’s matters and are influenced by the worldly sense of value and get washed away.

By the way, we are easily influenced by our society, because we spend a lot of time in it. And that society is not perfect one. We are tested in our imperfect society whether or not we have true faith and how much we are influenced by the enticing world.

James asked;

4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you?

We understand from the verse above that there were fights and hatred among believers at that time. And they had always been troubled by these problems.

James replied by himself;

4:1 Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

The desires that battle within them means nature of sin.

2) Four Steps

In Chapter 4, Verse 2, James explains four steps that the worldly believers take.

① They desire but do not have.

4:2 You desire but do not have,

This is the situation that they don't satisfy desires that come from selfish love.

② So, they kill.

4:2 You desire but do not have, so you kill.

Such a thing often happens today. People want money, so they commit murder during robbery, or they kill a marriage partner because of a talk about separation. They easily kill other people. (It is impossible when they are sober.)

The stronger their desires are, the greater **wars and conflicts** become.

Murder is a metaphorical expression. It is also applicable if one hates or gets angry with someone.

Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'

5:22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

We learn from the Word that humans have a murderous intention in their minds. There were things like this in Christian churches in those days of James. A believer like Paul who had pure faith was rare. Paul came to realize it and felt sorry.

③ They covet but they cannot get what they want.

4:2 You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.

When they covet, they cannot get what they want, their oppression gets stronger. Their desires will escalate more.

Then,

④ **They quarrel and fight.**

4:2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.

* Like this, their desires will escalate and never be satisfied.

It is a well-known fact. Then, why do such fights happen?

2. The Reason Why They Do Not Receive Their Desires

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.

What humans ask God are their own desires such as good health, safety of their family, a thriving business, success on an examination and so on. They all are for their benefit. They rarely give a beautiful prayer to God, “My Lord. Make me belong to You. Please accept my body, heart and property.”

A lot of prayers are given for their **own happiness**. Christians in those days were also influenced by the climate of the society. James encouraged them not to be influenced by the world but focus on the highest priority.

James picked up two reasons why they didn't receive their desires.

1) Two Reasons

① **They don't ask God.**

God's nature is as below—

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

② **They ask with wrong motives.**

When they ask, they do not receive, because they may spend what they get on their pleasures.

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.

Then, what should we do? It is important not to ask with wrong desires but do with correct motives.

2) The Correct Motives

With what motives do we ask to God? The Bible teaches that we should make a prayer that fulfills God's will.

When we hear the term, God's will, we remember **the Lord's Prayer** that Jesus taught.

Jesus taught the following prayer in the third section.

6:10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

We sometimes think that God's will is near to us and sometimes is far from us. God's will means His mind. The prayer means that God's mind may be fulfilled in our daily lives on earth as it is in heaven. In heaven God has His Sovereignty and it is the most precious place (the Kingdom of Heaven) that God's will is fulfilled.

God is a good God and He has the best plan for us. However, it is regrettable for us that we don't understand God's will. We are not able to realize His will. Therefore, we give priority to our desires (selfish desires).

Then, how can we understand God's will? I would like to pick up the following three points.

① Through the God's Word

The author of Psalms praised God as below,

119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

God's Word (the Bible) lights our way to go. Even if our path is in darkness, we are able to see it by the light. We are blessed because God lights our path that we are not able to see it. Therefore, it is indispensable for us to read the God's Word every day.

② Through a Prayer

A prayer is a conversation with God. We don't understand God's guidance if we don't pray. We pray and then we understand God's response.

Jesus taught His disciples before He taught **the Lord's Prayer** as below—

Matthew 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

We need to go into our room (tameion) that no one see us and become quiet before God and pray. We make it a rhythm of our daily life. God, our Lord, often speaks in our quiet voice.

③ Through Fellowship

1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 John 1:3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

It refers to a vertical fellowship with God. The Bible also teaches,

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

It refers to fellowship with one another, a horizontal fellowship. God reveals His will in the vertical and horizontal fellowship.

What do you think about today's message? Let's pray to God in full conviction with faith (trust) in Him. Let's give prayers to Him according to His will.

1 John 5:14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

5:15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "From Where Are You Influenced?"

—Come Close to God—

We live in a society where many people don't know God the Creator and a lot of people don't have faith in Him. We live there for much of our lives. As a result, we are influenced without knowing it. As a result, we come to give priority to our desires by the influence of this world.

However, we understand God the Creator and His love and saved by Him, we naturally are influenced by God. When we come close to God, we are influenced by God more. As a result, we come to have desires of correct motives, not false ones. And we are able to live blessed lives.

Then, how can we understand God's will with the correct motives and receive His blessing?

1 . Through God's Word

2 . Through the prayer

3 . Through fellowship

Let's ask God to be the saints who are influenced by Him this week.

* God bless you!