

September 1, 2019

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Humble Yourself"

—The Correct Life Plan—

Text: James 4:13~17

**4:13 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."**

**4:14 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.**

**4:15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."**

**4:16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.**

**4:17 If anyone, then, know the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.**

#### Introduction

Now we have been studying the Epistle of James. Today's Scripture continues teaching about the theme that we studied last time. It deals with a problem that is revealed from the inside out.

James, the author of the epistle, says in verse thirteen as below—

**4:13 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."**

The verse above gives us some information of Jewish peoples' lives in those days.

The days of James, many Jewish people lived in the Roman Empire. The second chapter of the Book of Acts, records about people who came together to celebrate Pentecost, which was one of three main Jewish festivals.

**Ac 2:9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,**

**2:10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome.**

The verses above show that people came together from every part of the world. Let's look the

countries that the Roman Empire controlled in the days of the early Christian Church. (Map) The Jewish people were shrewd businessmen were prosperous in every place where they dwelt. Approximately 5500,000 Jewish people live in USA today and their financial power greatly influences American government.

How about businessmen today? Some of them travel all over the world following a minute-by-minute schedule with laptops, smartphones and electric notebooks. Business today globalizes so that the world market becomes larger than that of the Roman days and businessmen travel all over the world. They set a plan and work accordingly. If societies, companies and people eventually become rich, it must be great.

The Jewish people in those days seemed to be excellent businessmen. They planned well and decided a time to act. They also chose a town to carry on business beforehand and planned to **spend a year there**. Their purpose was to **make money**. Therefore, they didn't start without planning in detail. Like this, the Jewish people who are premeditative are called a wise and successful.

However, James gave a warning (twice in his epistle) to them, **“Now listen.”**

My friends, please read carefully. To plan well is not bad. Then, what did James regard as a problem? It was a way to make a long-term plan of life. It is today's theme. Let's study the following two points.

#### Main Points

### **1 . A life that Is Misunderstood**

#### **1 ) The Ephemeral Nature of Human Life**

**4:14 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.**

We usually don't think about the ephemeral nature of human life. However, if we think about it deeper, we realize that our life is finite. If you don't think about the most important things in life, you lead life that you misunderstand.

One day Jesus said as below—

**Luke 12:13 Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”**

**12:14 Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?”**

**12:15 Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”**

**12:16 And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.**

**12:17 He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’**

**12:18 Then he said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.**

**12:19 And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”**

**12:20 “But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”**

**12:21 This is how it will be with those who store up things for themselves but are not rich toward God.”**

I don’t think that I need to explain about **the parable** above. It is easy to understand.

The Bible teaches as below—

**Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.**

What plan do we make for our lives? The things we can do in our life are limited. Sometimes a person who we met yesterday disappears from our sight. Sometimes they suddenly vanish, those who we had high hopes for.

There is nothing else more precious than life. But, why? The reason is that we are able to live life only once. And there is the world after death.

God judges our deeds, whether they are good or bad. You may think that you live freely, however, with freedom comes responsibility.

Acts, Chapter 17 says as below—

**17:28 For in him we live and move and have our being.**

## **2) What Is the Problem?**

**4:15 Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”**

Those who James pointed were people who really had foresight; however, they were absolutely lacking one thing. ⇒ It was a sense of awe to the God.

In short, they didn't perceive that their life was finite and when that would be taken away.

No one understands about tomorrow even if he is prosperous in this world, actively carries on a big business and his life goes on the way what he wants it to.

James said, "You ought to say, **'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'**"

Understand what our life is like, **we live without awe toward God and do not live by following Him, who has the power of life and death, the Bible says it is "boasting" (arrogance).**

James definitely says to those who are boasting as below—

**4:16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.**

**4:17 If anyone, then, know the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.**

My friends, what does it mean **"the good they ought to do"** ?

⇒ **It means "to be humble" before God the Lord.**

Practicing faith is **to be humble** before God. James says that sin hinders people from **becoming humble**. In a sense, to be kind to other people and do the good may be easier than being humble. James teaches importance and blessing to be humble as a human being before Almighty God. James really loved the Jewish people, his fellow people.

Then how should we live life? The Bible teaches us to make a correct plan for life.

## **2. We Should Make a Correct Plan for Life.**

**4:15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."**

### **1) If It Is the Lord's Will**

Will refers to a speaker's **will (intention, resolution)**. The Bible teaches that we are able to do nothing that the will of God doesn't work and allow.

Then, what kind of life is it like to seek the Lord's will?

① **We, from a human side, do what we are able to do.**

We can do our best and then leave it into God's hands.

**For that we must plan and live faithfully.**

One day, when Peter asked a question, Jesus told a parable of a wise manager, who prepares (plans) food at the proper time as below—

**Luke 12:42 The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them food allowance at the proper time?”**

God appreciates the faithful manager who correctly plans.

\* What kind of life is it like to seek the Lord’s wills?

② **Things that we, from a human side, are not able to achieve put into God’s hands.**

→ **It is impossible for human beings to guarantee themselves, so they should put into “God’s will”.**

Even if we think it all right, it is not absolutely certain.

We hardly guarantee the safety except God. Human beings perfectly guarantee (life, for example) nothing. Therefore, we should trust in God and His will, who leads us to the best way to go.

\* What kind of life is it like to seek the Lord’s wills?

③ **We should trust in God’s sovereignty.** Act 18

To seek God’s will means to trust in God’s sovereignty.

Paul says as below—

**Acts 18:21 But as he left, he promised, “I will come back if it is God’s will. Then he set sail from Ephesus.**

Paul the apostle said, “If it is God’s will.” We come to know that he completely trusted in the Lord.

\* Like this, life of those who rely on **God’s will** trusts in God and is faithful. Such person receives God’s blessing. Life that relies on the Lord’s will and walks with Him receives heavenly blessing.

**2) Blessing to Welcome God in Our Life Plan**

James teaches how the God treats us when we become humble before Him.

① **God Gives Us His Grace.**

**4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble and oppressed.”**

God gives His grace to those who become humble. We come to understand that there is some relationship between **being humble** and **grace**.

God gives us grace.

Characteristics of **grace** (charis):

- (1) Unilateral (from God to humans)
- (2) Equally given (without distinction)
- (3) A gift (no gift in return)

God knows our need and He prepares a gift of His grace. How blessed we are.

\* When we **become humble** before the Lord, He gives us other gifts.

## ② **God Will Lift You Up.**

**4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.**

**To humble is to be lifted up** by the Lord.

Needless to say, we are not lifted up by ourselves, or other by other people. It doesn't mean to be said that you are a great man. Then, does it mean to become famous in the world? Does it mean to become someone who is greatly used in the Christian world? No, absolutely not.

**Being lifted up by the Lord doesn't depends on our situation. It is the attitude that we completely accept the present circumstances and have peace (shalom) of mind.**

My friends, we sometimes get angry and are offended because other people treat us badly and they don't lift us up. Then, we try to lift up by ourselves and expect other people do the same and finally we begin to pay too much attention to people and circumstances around us. Such life is far from the peaceful world that the Bible teaches.

James must have seen those people among Jewish Christians in those days. He must have written the epistle with a sorrowful heart.

The Bible doesn't evaluate us how we are used in this world and in the church. It doesn't mean that we need to be praised and are highly evaluated by people.

As we studied until now, if we are able **to be humble** before God by His grace, there is no problem under any circumstance. We are given the miraculous peace. We can say, "I am fine just the way I am now because God loves me and looks at me no matter how the other people think and treat me." That is that the Lord lift us up.

If we learned **to be humble** before the Lord, we don't need to complain about anything. We say, "I am satisfied, because the Lord is with me. I have peace of mind, because the Lord loves me."

It is the attitude of people who **are humble** before the Lord.

What God wants us is that each of us **becomes humble** before Him. The Lord is pleased with and trusts in such a God's tool and allows to join His work. Please pray for me so that I am able to be humble before the Lord, and I also pray for you, brothers and sisters. This is the real brothers and sisters who pray for each other.

### Conclusion

Title of the Testimony: "Humble Yourselves"

— The Correct Life Plan —

We listen to the Lord's voice today; we should **become humble** in the Lord.

Our selves seek a quite opposite attitude than the humble one. Such attitude causes conflict, criticism, division and stress.

On the contrary, the life that God wants us to lead is **to become humble** before the Lord. Then, how can we be humble before the Lord and lead the blessed life (the correct life)?

1. We should do the best that we are able to do.
2. We should put things that we are not able to achieve into God's hands.
3. We should trust in God's sovereignty.

\* God bless you!