

February 23, 2020

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (Open Church Worship)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "He Who Understands Is Blessed"

—Leading a Humble Life —

Text: James 1~5 (Center Scripture: Chapter 4:10)

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

Introduction

We have studied the Epistle of James 35 times since July 15th, 2018. Today, we study the highlights of the Epistle for the last time.

My friends, what did you learn from the Epistle of James?

I hope that you remember and sort out things you've learned. The epistle taught us the important things that we Christians, who believe in God the Creator, should receive seriously.

James first said as below,

James 2:17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

However, Paul an evangelist, insisted,

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a person justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

11:6 And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

These two verses seem to oppose each other, we first thought they might be incompatible. However, as we went on reading the epistle, we realized that they were like the two sides of a coin. Therefore, we understand that Paul's teaching and James' teaching were both correct.

Now, I want to sort out what we have studied through the epistle according to the following three points.

Main Points

1. James, the Author of the Epistle, was Jesus' Biological Brother.

The Gospel of Matthew records as below–

13:55 “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?”

He who wrote the epistle was a biological brother of Jesus Christ. This alone seems to be the major characteristic of the epistle.

My friends, please imagine how James in his childhood lived with Jesus and after growing up how he looked at Jesus. We find an unflinching interest as we imagine their lives. At least, James probably could not look at Jesus as the Savior and believe in Him at first.

The Bible records as below–

Matthew 13:57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home.”

James also seemed to be one of them who looked Jesus with an icy stare.

However, James later realized the fact of Jesus’ resurrection and was changed to be His follower.

1 Corinthians 15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

James, who was born again, became one of the leaders of the Church of Jerusalem and played an active part of preaching the Gospel.

Acts 15:13 When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me.

James who was in this situation, sent the epistle to Jewish Christians, his fellow people in those days. It is not for sure, but it is said that he worked until B.C. 60. He is said that he finally died a martyr.

These are characteristics of James, the author of the epistle.

2. Things that James Taught His Brothers

James reveals himself in his epistle like the saying, “The style is the man himself.”

The epistle is written according to characteristics that interacted with the strict religious environment that James grew up in and with the reality that he was born again through Jesus Christ.

It speaks to us and teaches us who live today.

The following points are given according to the characteristics of the epistle.

1) Christians Need a Self-Examination.

Let's think about the first the days of the epistle. At that time, the Christian church was greatly shaken. The Holy Spirit, who was promised, came down and the Christian church was born, and it seemed to spread quickly. However, early Christians came to have various problems in their real lives.

The reason was that Jewish people had followed the Law for thousands of years. They easily turned to the former life even though they were born again by the Gospel of Christ.

① There was a possibility that if they only believed, they could live an easy-going life.

This is not completely unrelated. It may be the reason why James' teaching emphasized **deeds**. These things are problems for Christians of any nation in all ages. Therefore, we should check ourselves and remember to lead sound lives. It is the attitude of Christians according to the Bible.

How about you? I have faith, but what attitude in faith do I take now? (We need to do a self-examination.)

2) Christians Should Be Practical in Faith.

Compared to Paul, James' Epistle seems to emphasize deeds. However, he means not only the outside deeds, but also inward things. He taught positive faith.

James pointed out that if faith could not be practically done in their heart and with deeds, it is meaningless. He probes the human heart thoroughly in his Epistle.

Probably, it was not easy for Jewish Christians to follow the Gospel in their heart, deeds and lives. James eagerly taught this point.

James emphasized to be practical in faith.

What do you think about James' teaching? Is our faith practical? Is it rational, emotional or mere faith of knowledge? Christians should examine their faith.

How about you? I have faith, but what attitude in faith do I take now? (We need to do a self-examination.)

3) Christians Should Live Humbly.

James taught the practical faith and especially he emphasized to **become humble**. James intentionally taught **humbleness** in faith.

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

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

My friends, we should also accept what James taught in his epistle.

Now we come to study the third point, about what a humble life is like.

3. What Is A Humble Life like?

Let's study the following eight points about leading a humble life.

1) Humbleness Under Trial Chapter 1: 1~18

1:12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

If we are under trial and to persevere it, we need to be humble. It is blessed that we receive **the crown of life** after persevering it.

It is written that Christians are given salvation of their souls and will receive a reward. It is the reward for Christians from the Lord, who lead a humble life.

2) Humbleness before God's Word Chapter 1:19~27

1:21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Abraham was faithful when he listened to God's Word. His humbleness before God's led him to a faithful attitude.

What do you think? How humble are we before God's Word?

3) Humbleness to Our Neighbors Chapter 2:1~26

2:8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.

Love for neighbors is one of the important teachings of the Law.

Matthew 22:36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

22:37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 22:38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

22:39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

22:40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Jesus taught that **love for our neighbor is the second great law.**

How about you? I have faith, but what attitude in faith do I take now? (We need to do a self-examination.)

4) Humbleness for Our Own Word Chapter 3 : 1~12

3:2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

3:8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

How about you? I have faith, but what attitude in faith do I take now? (We need to do a self-examination.)

5) Humbleness in Our Hearts Chapter 3:13~18

3:14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

3:15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

From heaven means from God.

3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

It is the wisdom from heaven that separates our thoughts in our hearts.

How about you? I have faith, but what attitude in faith do I take now? (We need to do a self-examination.)

6) Humbleness before the Lord Chapter 4: 1~17

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

I believe that the Scripture above is the most important one in the Epistle of James.

How about you? I have faith, but what attitude in faith do I take now? (We need to do a self-examination.)

7) Humbleness Preparing for Jesus' Second Coming Chapter 5: 1~12

5:9 Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door.

How about you? I have faith, but what attitude in faith do I take now? (We need to do a self-examination.)

8) Humbleness in Faith Chapter 5:13~20

5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Elijah was a human being, even as we are. The secret that an ordinary person experienced God's amazing work was that he was **a man of prayer**.

How about you? I have faith, but what attitude in faith do I take now? (We need to do a self-examination.)

* I picked up eight points that I was taught from each chapter. What do you think about these points? What is your response to studying the Epistle of James?

Conclusion

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—Leading A Humble Life—

Let's conclude the sermon with the following Scripture today.

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

* God bless you!