



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

October 13, 2021

From Pastor Tom

Signs of Arrogance (James 4:11-5:6)

The next lesson in James (after my sermon on October 3) is another hard one! James has an ax to grind. Or rather, several. It's as if when he sat down to write his letter to Christians everywhere, he had a list of topics he wanted to address, hard things he felt he needed to say, and he checked them off, one at a time.

After his beautifully encouraging statement in 4:10 ("Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you"), he slams the reader-listener with another condemnation, this time about speaking "evil" against one another (4:11-12). The word evil throughout his letter connotes anything that is counter to or works against God's will in the world. There are all kinds of ways of speaking evil against another, but James brings it into sharp and specific focus when he adds an injunction against "judging" one another. He reminds us that there is just one judge—and we aren't it! (We also can't help but be reminded of Jesus' similar words in Matthew 7:1-5). It is God's job to judge, not ours. God gave us his will through the law, James says, so that we would work on ourselves, not others! Why is that such a hard lesson? Why do we like to point fingers?

For his next exhortation, he addresses our tendency to talk as if we are our own masters, as if we control our own past, present and future. And whenever we try to be our own masters, we end up doing so in a way that serves ourselves, not God, even to the point of planning out our entire lives and prioritizing making money ahead of trusting God. "What is your life?" James asks. "For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." (His Jewish listeners in particular will remember the words of "the Teacher" in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity" (or "vapor," or "mist"; Eccl 1:1 and following). Instead, James advises, we should say "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that. As it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil" (James 4:13-17).

Speaking of arrogance, and speaking of money, James next slams "you rich people." And I think he means us! Money—wealth—has become our god. To the horrific extent that we even defraud others to further pad our pockets. James' condemnation is brutal: "You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you." Again we are reminded of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume . . . but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matt 6:19-24). Apparently, this is a problem! For all of us!

James is not an easy read. But contrary to Martin Luther's dismissing opinion (calling it an "epistle of straw"), we desperately need to hear everything James has to say. Stay tuned for the next (and final) lesson, James 5:7-20. Let me just say he ends his letter on a powerful—and encouraging—note!

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **FMC Wednesday Night TONIGHT!** Come at 6:15 p.m. to enjoy tator tot casserole and veggies with blackberry cobbler and vanilla ice cream! Pastor Tom will be leading a study of James 4:11-5:6 at 7 p.m. in the chapel, and youth will meet.
- ☞ **Hartland Pregnancy Care is hosting its Hartland Fundraising Banquet Tuesday, October 19 at 6:30 p.m. at the Wild Prairie Event Center in Newton, KS.** Outlaw BBQ is catering the meal. This year's fundraiser speaker is David Williams. David shares the devastation of abortion and the forgiveness and healing of Jesus Christ that has transformed his life. David's story is so important for all to hear. Registration is open! Call 316.283.7333 now to reserve your seat.
- ☞ **Tabor College presents Dr. David S. Janzen, Oct. 25, 2021:** President Janzen is the fifth speaker in the vocation and service lecture series "Exaudio: Listen and Live." Janzen, a 1990 graduate of Tabor, was named the college's 14th president in May 2021. He will be giving the following presentations in the Richert Auditorium:
 - Monday, Oct. 25 at 10 a.m.: "Career or Calling— Asking the Right Questions"
 - Monday, Oct. 25 at 7 p.m.: "The Paradox of Christian Entrepreneurship"*The Tabor Lectureship in Vocation and Service is an annual academic lectureship in which a scholar is invited to present on a meaningful expression of Christian discipleship that arises from his or her professional discipline. The purpose of the lectureship is to challenge and encourage believers in their individual and collective calling of work and service for Christ and his kingdom. The term exaudio is a Latin word that means to listen, comprehend, and respond faithfully.*
- ☞ **Hillsboro's annual Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat is October 27 from 7-8 p.m.** You are invited to leave canned goods on your porch to donate to Main Street Ministries, which will be picked up by youth groups of Hillsboro. All First Mennonite youth are invited to participate!
- ☞ **Jordan Feliz "Next to Me" tour is coming to Tabor College October 29 at 7 p.m. in the Shari Flaming Center for the Arts!** [Tickets are on sale now:](#) VIP tickets \$45 (early entry and Q&A with Jordan), Main Floor \$20, Gallery \$15. Follow the link above or call the box office at 620-947-3121 ext.1402 to get tickets. For group purchases of 10 or more, use coupon code TaborArtsJF to receive a \$5 per ticket discount.
- ☞ **Sun., Oct. 31 – Bethel College fall choral showcase, "Bethel Sings," featuring small and large groups, 4 p.m.** NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION to the Ad Building steps, or Memorial Hall in case of rain.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **COVID-19 protocols:** The FMC Covid response team is urging the following regarding the Covid virus: 1. Masks are required when we gather indoors, 2. FMC should reduce capacity in the sanctuary and fellowship hall to 50%.
- ☞ **Last week to see "Roots and Wings: Our Gift from Mother Nature," a group exhibition by the Springdale Printmakers with sculpture by Beth Vannatta** (all associated with the Springdale Arts and Nature Center, Halstead), in the Regier Gallery in Luyken Fine Arts Center at Bethel College through Friday, Oct. 22. The gallery is closed Mon.-Tues., Oct. 18-19, for Bethel's fall break, and open 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. *Bethel's current COVID-19 protocols recommend physical distancing and mask-wearing indoors.*

Verse of the Week

“You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” –Psalm 16:11 (NRSV)