

MONDAY 05 September 2022 "Spiritual Adultery" (James 4:4-8)

Hello, my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

For many of you today is a holiday from work and school. I hope it's a great day for you. The purpose of this holiday has long been forgotten as most people simply enjoy it as a great three-day weekend transitioning from summer to fall. But as you perhaps know, this day was declared a holiday to celebrate an important aspect of our God design as human beings. *God designed humanity with the desire and even passion to WORK, to accomplish things, to improve things, and then the desire to work TOGETHER to accomplish more than we can alone!*

Now of course Labor Day has never been a religious holiday nor a day of worship. Organizers of this holiday have made it about celebrating the accomplishments of mankind through our hard work. *But here and now I want to declare that Labor Day is fundamentally a celebration of what God did in the Garden of Eden when He created the first human Adam and put him in the garden.* Genesis 2:15 says **"The LORD God took the man [Adam] and put him in the Garden of Eden to WORK it and take care of it."** Amen my friends, I hope that gives you a fresh perspective on this day called Labor Day!

Almost at the complete opposite end of the Bible we find a little 5-chapter letter titled simply "**James**". It's the name of the man who wrote this letter. As I've been introducing James to you, I've told you James was younger brother to Jesus, and he did not believe Jesus was anything other than his older brother until after Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead. *Then, as James encountered the RISEN Jesus, we believe multiple times, everything changed for James!* He became a passionate believer in and follower of Jesus and after Jesus ascended back to heaven, in full view of James and others, James became one of the apostles of Jesus, a very active part of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem in those early years.

James is writing his letter under the very clear direction of the Holy Spirit of God. This letter is the first letter written after Jesus ascended to heaven, and this letter is addressed to the Jewish Jesus followers scattered all over the Roman Empire. We're in James' fourth chapter now, so pull up a chair and let's watch James write.

As we've seen James doesn't sugar coat his words. He speaks with clarity and challenge. Listen: **"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity with God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.... Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you."** (James 4:4-8)

Now James knew he was writing primarily to Jews, Jews who knew the history of Israel very well and they knew their Old Testament Scriptures well. Therefore, the words James chose landed much more powerfully on their ears than they do on our ears today. For example... *Jews knew the Old Testament was filled with God warning His people Israel about the challenge of living as a people of God surrounded in their cities and towns by people from other parts of the world, other cultures, and very different religions.* Shrines and temples built for worshippers of man-made idols representing other gods were everywhere, inviting Jews to worship many gods!

As Jews reflected on their national history, they remembered several times their ancestors had committed the great sin of turning away from worship of Almighty Holy God and turning to the worship of idols.

Do you remember they made a golden calf when they were at Mount Sinai, only a few weeks after God has rescued them from Egyptian slavery? Why a golden calf as we see in Exodus 32? *Because that's the type of worship they saw when they lived in Egypt...* man made golden idols of many different animals, each with a name, and all passionately worshipped, even though they were nothing but statues.

They also remembered the story of their prophet Elijah who called the people to the top of Mount Carmel for a showdown. 1 Kings 18 tells us the 450 prophets of Baal built their altar and brought their idols and called on Baal to send fire on their sacrifice, but nothing happened. Elijah built his altar and called on Jehovah God and fire fell from heaven burning up his sacrifice and even all the water they poured on that sacrifice. *The people all fell prostrate before God repenting of their idolatry and declaring Jehovah God to be the only true God.*

*Repeatedly God's Old Testament prophets had challenged the people declaring that their dabbling with idols of the nations around them was **Spiritual Adultery!*** They were giving to idols the worship that should only be given to the LORD God, the one and only Creator God. Through Isaiah the prophet God said **"I am the LORD, that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols."** (Is. 45:8) Oh the Jewish Jesus followers all over the Roman Empire understood exactly the accusation James was making. God wanted these Jewish Christians to guard their hearts very carefully, so they did not follow their ancestors and turn away from Jesus into spiritual adultery!

Jesus had rescued them from their sin by His death. His resurrection had defeated sin, Satan and death, and He was now their reigning King in heaven, watching very carefully and closely all that was taking place on earth. *Jesus had sent His Holy Spirit to live within each of them His followers so they would stay connected with Him in a vital relationship and not drift spiritually.*

And so, James made it abundantly clear, didn't he?

"Friendship with the world means enmity with God. Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" WOW those are very strong words aren't they? An enemy of God, really? *WHY would being a friend of the world cause someone to be an enemy of God?* Well, that's fairly clear, isn't it? Since the day when Adam and Eve invited Satan's influence into the Garden and rejected God's presence with them, humanity in every generation and in every place has done the very same thing.

Romans chapter 1:18-32 states it very, very clearly. *We, human beings, have in a thousand ways told God to GET OUT of our politics, our entertainment, our health care, our business dealings, our families, our law enforcement, our education and even our athletics. Sadly, even many religious institutions including churches and Seminaries have pushed God out!* And when anyone or any family or any community or any institution pushes God out a moral/spiritual vacuum develops and **into that vacuum EVIL will come always and very quickly.**

Of course, you see it everywhere, don't you? *That is why friendship with the world, the evil world, automatically positions you in opposition to God and His Holiness.* Now ponder that as you consider your life values, your ethics, your relationships, your normal patterns of life.

Finally, James implores us: **"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you."** (James 4:7.8) Into his Jewish readers minds would quickly come some of the very last words of the Old Testament written by the prophet Malachi, about 400 years before this: **"I the LORD do not change. So, you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from My decrees and have not kept them. Return to Me and I will return to you, says the LORD Almighty."** (Malachi 3:6,7)

Once again James puts down his stylus, looks all of us in our eyes and goes over to the window, looking out into the Jerusalem streets. Oh, what a challenge it is to keep our hearts pure before God. So easily we are drawn away to other things or different ideas that are contrary to Jehovah God and His design for us His people. *Why, why do we drift so easily my friends?* Why is it so hard to resist the devil and all of his schemes to ensnare us and draw us away from our great God who loves us, and our Savior who gave His life so we could live free from sin bondage, and even the Holy Spirit who lives within us and is ready to help us stand firm at all times?

Could this Labor Day Monday be a day of return for you and me, my friends? A return to God. A return to living with Jesus as our honored and celebrated Savior and King. A return to our fully yielding, every part of our lives, every day to the guiding of the Holy Spirit living within us so there is no spiritual/moral drift and no chance of spiritual adultery. Yes, we will continue to live in this evil infested world, surrounded by every imaginable type of invitation for us to drift away from God into the darkness.

And yes, 1 Peter 5:8 warns us that the devil will continue prowling around looking for anyone who is vulnerable that he can attack. But James urges us to resist the devil and turn away from the attractions of this world and run to Jesus! Go into the Throne Room of God and let's renew our vibrant relationship with the Holy Spirit. *Let's take James' words today friends, and here's a song to help ponder James' warning and Jesus' invitation...*

Today's Scripture is James 4:4-8.