

WEDNESDAY 07 September 2022

“Omission / Commission” (James 4:13-17)

Hello, my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Are you a 'planner' or someone who likes to do things spontaneously? *When you are preparing for a trip away, do you make detailed lists and pack several days in advance, or throw things together into a bag the day of your journey?*

We've been with the apostle James as he's writing to Jewish Jesus followers all across the Roman empire in the middle of the first century. A very large portion of these people were relative newcomers to the places where they lived. They'd been run out of Jerusalem or other major Jewish cities by persecution. Some had been given lots of advance warning, plenty of time to sell their homes or businesses, say their goodbyes and move in an orderly fashion, carefully selecting their new home. Others had fled in the middle of the night, rushing out of town with essentially the clothes on their backs and their babies in their arms. You've seen the graphic pictures of refugees all around the world in our day my friends, it was very, very similar in James' day.

So, we've gathered again in James' little house, and he has the parchments spread out in front of him, stylus in his hand and he speaks as he writes: ***"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.' 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. Instead, you ought to say, 'IF it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is you boast in your arrogant schemes."*** (James 4:13-16) James is right, isn't he, my friends? None of us can accurately predict the future. There are way too many variables in life. Why, we can't even guarantee ourselves if we will wake up tomorrow morning nor can we even guarantee our next breath or heartbeat. *Every day, every moment, every breath is a gift from God, do you agree?* So, are you grateful to God for life and how are you living your life in gratitude to God?

So, what does James mean here? Is he saying, since we have no way of predicting the future, we should therefore NOT make any plans, just live each day, each moment as it comes? No, that's not at all what James is saying. That's very irresponsible, isn't it? We send our children to school assuming the teachers will help them gain the education they will need to survive in life later on. We make or buy clothes a little larger for our children believing they are going to keep growing, right? We build our homes on sunny days, but we put roofs on them in anticipation that eventually it's going to rain or snow! In fact, if you'll look closely, almost EVERY aspect of your life is built on assumptions that you make about the future.

James is cautioning us about two extremes. One is the person who makes NO plans or preparations for the future and lives each day simply existing. The other is the person

who so over plans that they live in perpetual disappointment that things have not turned out as they planned or hoped. *James calls us to live our lives confident that God is sovereign over all, He sees all, and nothing happens in our lives without God's full awareness. Thus, God is ready to lead us through ANY experience in our lives if we will trust Him.*

But James also warns us about making our life plan independent or isolated from any God consideration. *Planning is wise and healthy, but the wise person plans inviting God to lead their life, the development of their plans, and the actual living out of their plan in lock step with God at work in their lives.*

That's one reason I call our time together each day **"Walking with Jesus"**. It's an invitation for you and me to remember God has designed the human life experience to be maximized when and as we live each day following the God who made us and is sustaining our life! Doing that successfully, however, requires an unusual spiritual maturity and alertness, as a person develops spiritual discernment, the ability to discern WHEN God is speaking to you, WHAT God is saying to you and HOW to follow God's guidance. *May I ask how far along in that process of spiritual discernment you are today my friends?*

James is right calling our lifetime a '**mist**' or a '**vapor**'. While 70 or 80 years seems like a long time at various stages in that long journey, especially difficult times, pause right now for a moment and look back over your life. 20 years ago, 50 years ago if you are old enough. *While you've experienced so many things, does it seem to you that your lifetime has flown by quickly?* Have you also noticed that when you leave one place and move to another it isn't long before the old place fades in your memory? Guess what, you also become a fading memory to the people in the past place. So, James is calling us to look closely at our lives and learn from our journeys by asking important life questions.

Questions like these:

1. What great life lessons have I learned during each easily identifiable season of my life, such as my early education years or my teenage years or my twenties or the years I had young children living under my care at home or the years I was a caregiver for my ageing parents. *God has intended our lifetime to be a continuous journey of learning and growing in wisdom from God as He teaches us life principles in each phase of our lives.*

2. *As important as it is to look back, we must also look forward, ready to both live in the wisdom we've gained from our past but also keep learning.*

No matter what your current age or stage of life or marital status or even health, as you look forward in your life, what are the next identifiable seasons for you and what do you hope God will do in your life in each of those seasons? What seasons you may ask? Well, if you have children still at home, are you looking forward to the season we call 'empty nest'. Those few years after all your children have moved out of the house.

Perhaps you are looking forward to the season of grandparenting. Or if you are working, perhaps you are looking ahead to a retirement season. If you are in the older retirement years maybe you are thinking about what life will be like for you as a widow or widower? *It's important we look back, but also very important we look forward and whichever direction we look, always looking for the evidence of God at work in our lives!*

Finally, James leans forward again to write: **"If anyone then knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, for them it is sin."** (James 4:17) Oh my this is big, my friends! Almost always when someone uses the word 'sin' we assume they are speaking of a word or action or attitude that was offensive to God, harmful to others, and perhaps even wicked. *Those would be 'sins of commission':* angry, deceitful, sinful words spoken, or destructive attitudes or wrong choices, or illegal choices, behavior which is wrong and harmful and destructive. *That is doing or saying the things you know are wrong.*

But James here is talking about **"sins of OMISSION"**! This is about NOT doing the things you know are right! I can hear you, my friends... *'What James, are you serious? God will hold me just as accountable for NOT doing the right things I know I should do as He does holding me accountable for doing the wrong things I know I shouldn't do??* YES, my friends, that is exactly what James is saying here. Sin before God is either doing or saying that which you know is offensive to God; or NOT doing or saying those things which you know would be God honoring and helpful to the people your life touches.

Sins of Commission and sins of Omission are both very serious in God's sight and we'll be held accountable to God for all of it when we stand before holy Justice God giving account for our lifetime! James 4:17 might be a verse in your Bible you want to memorize and underline and give some real serious consideration to as you transition into the rest of your life!

James has set down his stylus and is deep in thought. I suggest we do the same. How much do you and I place our future plans under the sovereign authority of God? *What would it be like if God ordered, guided every step you and I take from this moment forward, for the rest of our lives?* Here's a great, short, acapella song declaring that hope my friends!

Today's Scripture is James 4:13-17.