



Sunday 25-10-2020

James 5 v 1 - 6

Today we start on the last chapter of James, a book that has challenged us to keep control of our tongue and emotions. Now we move on to earthly possessions and their value in Gods Kingdom.

I am sure that many of us have dreamed of winning lots of money, in the past it was on the pools now it is the lottery. Many of us have probably spent all the money, £1 million or more, over and over again, may be we would need more than one big win to cover the cost of all the houses, cars, boats, clothes, charity giving that has been planned. Or may be someone in your family has come into a lot of money and you are hoping that they will give you some of it so that you can buy something you always wanted. In my opinion having money and living a comfortable lifestyle is fine, but this passage warns us against having too much material wealth.

There is no question in my mind that many in the UK and most of the developed countries, many people have a comfortable standard of living. I am also aware that there are people through many different circumstances who are not able to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle. I am not making any judgement on anyone's life style or living standards; it's just that this section of James focus's our thoughts on how we live our lives.

These verses split down into two sections 1-3 and 4 -6, so lets look at these two sections. The first section focuses on material things.

This passage is written to those in society who have a large amount of material wealth, some of whom may have been part of the early growing Christian church. Those who were outside the Christian church were sometime referred to as pagans and the commentaries suggest that it is to these people that James is aiming his writing. In a way it doesn't matter to whom he was writing the message is the same, do not put too much trust in earthly possessions or fine clothes as eventually all these things will disappear, either eaten by moths or rust will destroy them. Remember part of the Sermon on the Mount, where in Matthews Gospel, chapter 6 verse 19 it says 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal.' This echos the teaching that James is providing in these verses.

Verses 4 – 6 focus on how people should treat others. Verse 4 starts off by reminding the rich of how they have broken their promises by failing to pay workers for the work that they have completed in good faith. Going on to point out to them that they have lived a very comfortable possibly even an extravagant life style, while those around them do not have enough to eat. It would appear that some were eating and getting fat, while others were not. This was not the way that people who had money at that time should have behaved, not only will they be dis-liked by those around them, their wealth will be taken away from them, because what they have done has been seen by the Lord Almighty. Thinking about these verses again brought me back to the sermon on the mount and chapter 7 v 12 which says



'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets'. Again this sums up the teaching of James in these few verses.

Has much changed in the nearly 2000 years since James wrote this letter to the early church scattered throughout the known world? In short – NO – there are still many people who have lots and appear to live an abundant material led life style, while there are many others who do not anything and live in great poverty. This is not only around the world; this is in our country as well. What can we at Stanground do about this teaching in these verses, this week and in the time to come?

I would suggest that we do our best not to worry too much about the material possessions we have in life and may be want in the future. Also to my mind, the slightly more important message from these verses is how we treat people, treat them as fairly as we would like to be treated ourselves.

There are some people around, but probably not anyone here today, that like a good gossip, but may not like it if they hear what people are saying about them, especially if it is very nice. I have had a few people say to me in the past when I was working full time, that I was no fun as I didn't bring any gossip to the conversation. I have to say that personally I don't like gossip. I remember a lesson I learned early on my working life. I was working in a department store in the shoe department, and I was also friendly with a more senior gentleman from gents wear. One day he called me over after hearing me say something not nice about someone else and asked me would I be prepared to say what I said to that persons face? I told him no I wouldn't, so he told me it would be better in that situation to keep my thoughts to myself. I learned a valuable lesson that day, to treat others I would want to be treated myself.

I have to say that these days with all the access people have to social media, this is equally important. How many times do you hear of people wishing they hadn't put something on social media.

Today and this week, let us think about our material possessions that we have and be very grateful for them, also think about how we treat those around us. By treating our possessions and others around us as God would want us to, we can show the love of God which we all have in us.

I hope and pray that God will show us through our prayers how we need to treat those around us.

Amen.