

Relationally Wise
James 3:13-18 // March 10, 2019, Willowdale Chapel Kennett Square

Sermon Summary: We've heard it said, "the ends justify the means". But what if the ends leave you friendless, or worse, a perpetrator? What if the ends leave a wake of hurting people? What if the ends aren't the result you hoped for? We stake a lot in the belief that what we believe is right will actually end up being good for us.

In James 3:13-18 we learn that Wisdom is of God but not always man's first choice. James wrote this section, in fact, to deal with Pastors and church members who were claiming to be wielding wisdom; but the results indicated otherwise. In the text, James outlines two different forms of wisdom: Earthly and Heavenly. Earthly wisdom is marked by two heart traits: Bitter Envy and Selfish Ambition. James goes on to say that the results of these traits and the exercise of this wisdom is devastating: disorder and of the devil. Earthly Wisdom is rooted in humanity – it's the choice we make when we refuse God's leadership.

James goes on to explain and promote a second form of wisdom: Heavenly Wisdom. In verse 17-18 James outlines the character traits of Heavenly Wisdom. Heavenly Wisdom is Pure, Peace-Loving, Considerate, Submissive, Full of Mercy and Good Fruit, Impartial, and Sincere. This wisdom is rooted in the character of Jesus and reflects Jesus. Heavenly wisdom builds a community by cultivating healthy relationships. It builds up others by following Jesus. The byproduct of this trust is that the community is strengthened. While the traits may connote a passive posture, the truth is that they are incredibly active and require exercise. As sinful people we aren't inherently pure – we must practice purity of heart. As broken people we don't live peacefully with God or others – we must practice peace. As selfish people we aren't naturally considerate – we must elevate others all the time. You get the idea – we just aren't naturally bent towards Jesus. But it's precise because of Jesus that we can be this way – this is who Jesus is.

A Spiritually Healthy person uses Heavenly Wisdom to cultivate a Relationally Healthy Community. If we are going to build the community up then we must be followers of Jesus. We follow Jesus by embracing His way of living – his wisdom – and cultivate a healthy relationship with God. Our earthly relational strife is a key indicator to the state of our relationship with God.

It can be daunting, to take inventory of our soul. But the truth is we are either embracing death or embracing life. We are either actively pursuing Heavenly Wisdom or actively pursuing Earthly Wisdom. There's no middle ground. Make your choice.

Discussion Guide:

1. Review James description of heavenly wisdom in verse 17-18. In what areas is God calling you to grow right now?

2. Take stock of your relationships both inside and outside of church – are they healthy? If so, why? If they aren't healthy, consider sharing with your group why they're in their current state.
3. Are you contributing to a relationally healthy culture at Willowdale? If not, seek God and seek others for forgiveness.