

Sermon Series: Book of James 11/15/2015**Title: Drawing Near To God****Sermon Text: James 4:8-17**

Big Idea: James primary reason for writing his book was to bring Christians closer to God. He has illustrated the pitfalls and blessings for the Christian who desire to develop a closer relationship to getting closer to God by avoiding the pitfalls and our Christian character.

Bookstore shelves are full of self-help books to encourage the quality of our lives however, it is the prudent and wise Christian who wants to get closer to God by striving to improve our relationship with God by recognizing the danger that exist this world and avoiding them. In our text today James gives us a (1) "Warning against pride" (vv.8-10) and (2nd) a "Warning about Criticism" (vv.11-12) and (3) Warning against arrogant self-confidence (vv. 13-17).

Text Illustration: The story is about a man by the name of Larry Walters, a 33-year-old man who decided he wanted to see his neighborhood from a new perspective. So, he went down to the local army surplus store and bought forty-five used weather balloons.

That afternoon he strapped himself into a lawn chair, to which several of his friends tied the now helium-filled used weather balloons. He took with him, something to drink, a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich, and a BB gun, figuring he could shoot the balloons one at a time when he was ready to land.

Walters, who assumed the balloons would lift him about 100 feet in the air, was caught off guard when the chair soared more than 11,000 feet into the sky--smack into the middle of the air traffic pattern at Los Angeles International Airport. Because he was too frightened to shoot any of the balloons, he stayed airborne for more than two hours, and forced the airport to shut down its runways for much of the afternoon.

Soon after he was safely grounded and cited by the police, reporters asked him three questions:

"Were you scared? "Yes."

"Would you do it again? "No."

"Why did you do it?" "Because you can't just sit there."

The Christian who wants to get closer to God "can't just sit in the pew we must listen to God through His word. We won't need balloons filled helium, only need to draw near to God. James writes;

Read Sermon Text

James 4:8-17 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and

weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. 11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? 13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. NKJV

1. Warning against Pride (vs. 8-10)

James 4:8-10 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. NKJV

- a. James states that if we draw near to God He will draw near to us. Drawing near to God doesn't mean that we live in a particular way but that we seek a perfect relationship with God. This perfect relationship come out of a perfect heart and it is only the blood of Jesus that can change what is flaw in to that which is perfect. In Matthew 5:19 tells us that the unregenerate heart produces an undegenerated life. James points out it is the pride in our lives that cause us to fall. He points out a pitfall that is in our path of life.

Matt 15:19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. NKJV

- b. In the days prior to the coming of Jesus to the cross the High Priest would enter to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies and offer up an offering for the sins of the people. This offering would close the gap be God and man which was created by sin. Yet this offering was only temporary. When Jesus died on the cross He paid the price for sin and it was permanent.

Hebrews 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. NKJV

- c. James tells to "wash our hands" and "purify our hearts" and draw near to God and He will draw us close to Him. James states that a double minded man is a person who has let pride bring him down. But, if we humble

ourselves before a Holy God, He will draw us close to Him and we will have that perfect relationship with Him.

Text Illustration: Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote this about our spiritual battle: A man who does not understand the nature of the problem he is confronting is a man who is already doomed to failure. Christian people are like first-year college students—they think at first that every subject is quite simple, there is no difficulty. Well, we know what is likely to happen to such when they face an examination! The first thing you have to do is to understand the nature and character of your problem. So we have to realize that we are called, in the Christian life, to a battle, not to a life of ease; to a battle, to a warfare, to a wrestle, to a struggle.

2. Warning against Criticism (vs.11-12)

James 4:11-12 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? NKJV

- a. By nature we are very judgmental of other and the way they live or the things they do. If they don't fit in to our mold we often will be very critical of them. Somehow we seem to have this idea that people should be like Jell-O. Many believe that God has a mold which is shaped like the perfect Christian and you can't be a Christian if we aren't conformed to this mold. The only mold we must be conformed to is Jesus Christ. By the very nature of the term "Christian" it implies a disciple of Jesus.
- b. Worldly minded people are often quick to judge the actions of others and very slow to recognize their own shortcomings. Previously James had given us a warning about the tongue. As a Christian we have a responsibility to cry out a warning to the danger ahead in a person's life but not condemn the person. We must hate the sin but love the sinner.
- c. However, it is important that we get our own lives in order first.

1 Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? NKJV

Peter is telling us that we should clean our own house before we tell others how to clean their house. I find it interesting that we have the unique ability to see a small fault in someone else's life but are unable to recognize the huge sinkhole in our own.

Matthew 7:1-5 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it

will be measured back to you. **3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?** 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! **First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.** NKJV

Jesus himself when confronting the sin in someone's life did not condemn them but forgave them and encouraged them to go and sin no more.

3. Warning against arrogant self-confidence (vv. 13-17)

James 4:13-17 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. NKJV

- a. On the surface we may look at this section of scripture and draw the conclusion that James is saying don't worry about the future. To some extent that would be correct however, James is warning about self-confidence. Depending on ourselves for the future. James reminds us that this life is very short. It only seems like yesterday that I was in high school or serving in the military or getting married but now it has been almost 50 years later. James describes this life like a vapor. This time of the year early in the morning we may experience fog on the country side. However in a very short time the fog is gone and it is just a memory. So is life! While living it time seems to linger but soon it is gone.
- b. James warning is not dwell on our own self but to trust in God. Look to God for today, tomorrow and all eternity.

Warren Wiersbe's writes:

Pride, criticism, and self-confidence go together. Humble people pray for God to help disobedient Christians, and they try to love them back to fellowship with Christ. The humble know how to say "If the Lord wills" as they make their plans day by day. But these believers were boasting of their plans and anticipated success. They would go to the big city, set up business, and come back wealthy! He warns them that this carnal boasting and self-confidence is dangerous. To begin with, we know nothing about tomorrow; only God knows. The person who boasts about tomorrow is claiming to be God! Furthermore, life itself is uncertain - a cloud that quickly comes and goes (Job 7:7; Ps 102:3). We do not even know when life will end, so how can we be so confident? We ought to say, "If the Lord

wills, we shall live Every believer needs to keep before his or her eyes an awareness of the brevity of life. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps 90:12). Boasting about an unknown future is sin. Yet so many people make their plans without praying or seeking the mind of God. They live like the worldly sinner who thinks he has security for the future, but discovers he has lost everything (Luke 12:15-21).

Verse 17 sums up the chapter and points out that we can sin by neglect as well as by deliberate action. It is not simply what we do, but also what we do not do, that is sinful. This is why the Puritans used to talk about "sins of commission" and "sins of omission." Life is so brief that we cannot afford to waste it. We must make our lives count for Christ before He returns. (from Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament. Copyright © 1992 by Chariot Victor Publishing, an imprint of Cook Communication Ministries. All rights reserved.)

Text Illustration: TEMPORARY CASTLES

"A little boy is on the beach. On his knees he scoops and packs the sand with plastic shovels into a bright red bucket. Then he upends the bucket on the surface and lifts it. And, to the delight of the little architect, a castle tower is created.

"All afternoon he will work. Spooning out the moat. Packing the walls. Bottle tops will be sentries. Popsicle sticks will be bridges. A sandcastle will be built.

"Big city. Busy streets. Rumbling traffic.

"A man in his office. At his desk he shuffles papers into stacks and delegates assignments. He cradles the phone on his shoulder and punches the keyboard with his fingers. Numbers are juggled and contracts are signed and much to the delight of the man, a profit is made.

"All his life he will work. Formulating the plans. Forecasting the future. Annuities will be sentries. Capital gains will be bridges. An empire will be built. "All his life he will work. Formulating the plans. Forecasting the future. Annuities will be sentries. Capital gains will be bridges. An empire will be built.

"Two builders of two castles. They have much in common. They shape granules into grandeurs. They see nothing and make something. They are diligent and determined. And for both the tide will rise and the end will come.

"Yet that is where the similarities cease. For the boy sees the end while the man ignores it. Watch the boy as the dusk approaches.

"As the waves near, the wise child jumps to his feet and begins to clap. There is no sorrow. No fear. No regret. He knew this would happen. He is not surprised. And when the great breaker crashes into his castle and his masterpiece is sucked into the sea, he

smiles. He smiles, picks up his tools, takes his father's hand, and goes home.

"The grownup, however, is not so wise. As the wave of year's collapses on his castle he is terrified. He hovers over the sandy monument to protect it. He blocks the waves from the walls he has made. Salt-water soaked and shivering he snarls at the incoming tide.

"It's my castle,' he defies.

"The ocean need not respond. Both know to whom the sand belongs...

"And I don't know much about sandcastles. But children do. Watch them and learn. Go ahead and build, but build with a child's heart. When the sun sets and the tides take -- applaud. Salute the process of life, take your Father's hand and go home"

(Max Lucado, *More Stories for the Heart* (Multnomah: Sisters, Oregon, 1997), 224-225. From a sermon by Eric Lenhart, *Seasons of Life*, 8/16/2010)