

Sermon notes Littlebourne Chapel Sunday 6 July 2025

James 3: 13-18: *Two kinds of wisdom*

Introduction v13a *Who is wise and understanding among you?*

- Who is the wisest person with the most understanding you can think of? A teacher? Family member? Pastor? Politician? Fellow student? TV presenter?
- Where does their wisdom come from? Does it come naturally? From life experience? From book learning? From Holy Spirit guidance?
- σοφὸς = wise – used of spiritual teachers in Israel, believers endowed with spiritual and practical wisdom, Jewish teachers at the time of Christ, the naturally learned
- ἐπιστήμων = knowing, skilled, endued with knowledge, understanding
- OT *hakam* – applied to a skillful secular craftsman, but in religious sense = a man or woman whose manner of life projects the fear of God and the blessing of God rests upon him/her. The opposite is the “fool” who stubbornly refuses counsel and depends on his own understanding, Word appears most frequently in Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, books known as “wisdom literature”.
- Solomon asks for wisdom in 1 Kings 3 and God gives him a wise & discerning heart.
- Solomon compiles a collection of wise sayings in Proverbs, eg “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (1:7).
- Read Proverbs 3: 5-10.

1. V13b **True wisdom and understanding will show through in our lives by our good conduct**

- These are inner qualities. The key is that the good works are done not for display or self-satisfaction but in the meekness of wisdom.
- πραΰτης = meekness – an inner grace of the soul, as manifested by Jesus, an equanimity of spirit not occupied with self at all, closely linked with humility and self-control.
- The meekness shown by Jesus was a sign of His strength, not of inner weakness. His power, glory and deity were under control, voluntarily submitted to the will of the Father.
- He was taunted even as He was being crucified for our sins, but without reply in order to carry out our redemption through the wisdom of God.
- How do we react when we are unjustly criticised?
- Do we always treat other people respectfully, beautifully, honestly, excellently?
- καλὸς = intrinsically good, fair, beautiful, ethically good, right, honourable
- What kind of situations or people can provoke us into adverse reactions?
- Key verses are Proverbs 3: 5-6. True wisdom is about living in the way of the Lord, trusting in Him with all our heart and following in His ways – a high and demanding calling!

2. vv14-16 The character of earthly wisdom

- Examine your heart. If it contains bitter jealousy and rivalry, do not boast and conceal the truth. These characteristics are the opposite of the meekness mentioned in the previous verse. They refer to someone who has a critical, contentious manner, motivated by party spirit and selfish ambition.
- Can you think of people who present their views in a provocative or overbearing manner? What effect does this have on the hearers? Are you likely to accept the points they are making?
- They need to reconsider their approach if they wish to present a convincing argument.
- This kind of wisdom is characterized as being
earthly = having this materialistic world only in view
unspiritual = sensual, following animal impulses
demonic = deceived and damaging.
- The fruit of this kind of wisdom of the world, the flesh and the devil is confusion, chaos and an opening to every kind of wickedness.
- Do we see evidence of this in today's world? What can we do about it?

3. v17 The character of heavenly wisdom

- Heavenly wisdom as described here bears a remarkable similarity to the Fruit of the Holy Spirit as listed in Galatians 5: 22-23.
- It also coincides with the characteristics of the coming Messiah as described in Isaiah 11: 1-5.
- The words used to describe heavenly wisdom are
pure = the absence of any sinful or selfish motivation
peaceable = harmonious relationships between people and nations, God and man = shalom
gentle = forgiving, not insisting on the letter of the law
considerate = not stubborn or obstinate
submissive = willing to listen and knowing when to yield
full of mercy = Matt 7: 2
full of good fruit = to be known by the fruit it produces
impartial = without judging
sincere = without hypocrisy, seeking only God's glory

Conclusion v18

- Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.
- God's perfect grace = Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, showing His amazing love. God gives us something precious that we cannot produce for ourselves.
- "Far from being theoretical and speculative, James's concept of wisdom is thoroughly practical. It is the understanding and attitude that result in true piety and godliness," (Burdick)