

James 5 – losing our humility

With Christmas round the corner

- Lots of Turkeys who are getting very well fed
- They probably think that this is brilliant
- They are being stuffed
- But they do not know that in a few days
- They will all lose their lives
- That in a months' time
- They will all be eaten
- They are living in blissful ignorance of what is to come
- But there are so many in our world
- Who are getting fat

Which is why this chapter starts with a woe to the rich

- Look here you rich
- Woe to you Rich is Jesus' words in the sermon on the plain
- You have already got all you will ever have
- Jesus' other in the Magnificat says that the rich will be sent away empty handed
- A rich man comes to Jesus, wanting the secret to eternal life
- But he leaves with nothing as his wealth was his idol
- Habakkuk 2:18ff warns is Israelites that they have placed their trust in wood and gold
- Not God
- When the Spanish arrived in South America

- Met the Aztecs they were surprised how they treated Gold
- With Gold being a common resource for them
- They did not care about it]
- They used it to make common trinkets
- Their treasurer was feathers
 - There was once a businessman who was sitting by the beach in a small Brazilian village.
 - As he sat, he saw a Brazilian fisherman rowing a small boat towards the shore having caught quite few big fish.
 - The businessman was impressed and asked the fisherman, “How long does it take you to catch so many fish?”
 - The fisherman replied, “Oh, just a short while.”
 - “Then why don’t you stay longer at sea and catch even more?” The businessman was astonished.
 - “This is enough to feed my whole family,” the fisherman said.
 - The businessman then asked, “So, what do you do for the rest of the day?”
 - The fisherman replied, “Well, I usually wake up early in the morning, go out to sea and catch a few fish, then go back and play with my kids. In the afternoon, I take a nap with my wife, and evening comes, I join my buddies in the village for a drink — we play guitar, sing and dance throughout the night.”

- The businessman offered a suggestion to the fisherman.
- “I am a PhD in business management. I could help you to become a more successful person. From now on, you should spend more time at sea and try to catch as many fish as possible. When you have saved enough money, you could buy a bigger boat and catch even more fish. Soon you will be able to afford to buy more boats, set up your own company, your own production plant for canned food and distribution network. By then, you will have moved out of this village and to Sao Paulo, where you can set up HQ to manage your other branches.”
- The fisherman continues, “And after that?”
- The businessman laughs heartily, “After that, you can live like a king in your own house, and when the time is right, you can go public and float your shares in the Stock Exchange, and you will be rich.”
- The fisherman asks, “And after that?”
- The businessman says, “After that, you can finally retire, you can move to a house by the fishing village, wake up early in the morning, catch a few fish, then return home to play with kids, have a nice afternoon nap with your wife, and when evening comes, you can join your buddies for a drink, play the guitar, sing and dance throughout the night!”

- The fisherman was puzzled, “Isn’t that what I am doing now?”
- We have made our treasurer on Earth, where moths and rust will decay it
- Great poem by Shelley called Ozamindius – a man finds a statue to the king of kings
- But it has been forgotten and in decay
- “Look on his works you mighty and despair”
- The rich has got fat – by exploiting the poor
- They have lived in luxury while the poor suffered
- If this is not a story for today then what is
- While the rich stash their money in off shore accounts
- The poorest grab the scraps from food banks
- While Bankers get their bonuses
- Policemen, nurses, firemen, teachers are denied even the smallest wage rise
- The worse crime of all though is that they have killed the anointed one?
- What does James mean by that?
- Does he mean they are responsible for Jesus’ death
- Yes and No
- No, we are all sinners – Jesus life, death and resurrection was to redeem us from the power of sin
- Set us free to live lives we were created to live
- Free from sin and the power of sin that holds us back
- Yes, in the sense that the people Jesus offended was the rich and powerful
- The vested interests
- They were the target of his teaching

- He comes announcing a year of Jubilee in Luke 4 quoting Isaiah
 - Preach good news to the poor,
 - liberation for prisoners,
 - the blind see,
 - The oppressed set free
- These were not the rich
- They were the ones that he offended the most
- They were the ones his people movement
- The movement that came to its hightails on Palm Sunday
- Most threatened
- This was a revolution and they did not like it
- So they quashed the movement by, with the help of the Romans, killing Jesus
- So yes and no. We all play our part in Jesus' death
- But the rich were the ones he most threatened
- Now days the Devil has made Jesus not into a revolutionary
- But spiritualised him
- So often people say that Jesus was not political but spiritual
- He comes to save us from our sins and allow us to live in eternity with God
- James says no – this message was political
- Jesus is a practical saviour as well as a spiritual figure and leader

James moves on

- Feels like he changes tack
- But the theme of humility we prayed about last week is still present
- He talks of a seed in the ground
- Waiting for it to spurt out
- What is the seed we are waiting for?
- It is a seed of justice
- When everything is put right
- When the oppressors are judged
- And the oppressed are set free
- This is a time of Jubilee
- One day that will happen in all its fullness
- But we pray that heaven will come to earth
- That we will see the future now
- The prophets suffered for saying enough is enough
- They were imprisoned and killed
- They were silenced and kept quiet
- Because they spoke against the elites
- The abuse of power
- The control
- The worship of idols
- Leaders who sought only their own interests
- In Malachi he talks of the coming Messiah, that he will come to judge the world
- That he will bring justice – and what will this look like
- Malachi 2:5
- This mission starts with the incarnation
- And is completed in the eventual return of Jesus

- Liberation, justice and freedom
- This is what Jesus brings to the world

Job

- Job's story is an interesting one to choose
- Job was a faithful servant of God
- Blessed one
- He had more than enough
- He was content
- The Devil says to God – he only worships you because you bless him
- So all of it is taken away
- Even his health is removed and he is left in the ashes
- He is reduced to the lowest state
- He is humbled
- But he does not curse God
- He is rich but he does not believe in God because he is blessed
- He refuses to blame God, but does question why this has happened to him
- Through his trials he looks for God
- I know my redeemer lives he cries
- In the end he is restored
- James praises him for his endurance in the face of trials
- His audience would have been suffering
- Many at the hands of the rich
- James says keep on keeping on
- Keep going even when times are hard
- The Psalmist writes

- Trials may endure for the night but joy comes in the morning in Psalm 30
- The psalm concludes – that God has turned my mourning into dancing
- That my clothes of mourning have been cast off
- Replaced with clothes of Joy
- We await the coming of Christ
- We do not know when that might be
- In the meantime
- We are to bring heaven to earth to seek after justice
- For the poor and the oppressed
- To set captives free and help the blind to see
- To do that each day

Don't be Turkeys – storing up treasure on Earth

It will go, it will rust, it will decay

When you look back on your life – what do you want your Obituary to say about you?

That you made a difference in people's lives

Or you lived for yourself?