



*A Better Way*  
*5th and final sermon in the series on the Epistle of James*  
*James 5:13-20*

September 30, 2018, 9th Sunday after Pentecost and 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois  
The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel



I am going to tell you the story of the young man on the cover of today's bulletin (*shown above*).

In the wee morning hours of May 16, 1995 I was awakened by the telephone next to my bed. It was a call from one of the nurses in the NICU area of the University of Iowa hospitals. A couple who attended the church I served at the time had just delivered a baby boy who had a life threatening birth defect. They requested that I come to do an emergency baptism. By now my wife Sue was fully awake. She could overhear some of the conversation. Since we do not do "private" baptisms in our tradition we considered what Elder I could call at that time of the night to accompany me to the hospital. We both agreed that there was only one such elder, a woman named Grace.

Grace's name epitomized her name. The widow of a Presbyterian minister and the adopted "grandmother" of our two young daughters, she was also a woman that I could preview my sermons with to see if I was on the right track. I called Grace and picked her up about 15 minutes later. We drove the 30 or 40 minutes from our small town to the hospital in the darkness of the night punctuated only by the stars above and the oncoming headlights of traffic.

When we got to the hospital I did not know what to expect. I knew that my needs were simple; a small amount of water. The hospital, though, was fully prepared. They had a silver shell shaped bowl and a small pitcher of sterile water. As the parents, Grace and I surrounded their tiny son in his incubator I poured the water into the bowl as I recited the words that I knew by heart.

“Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, all authority in heaven and earth has been given unto me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you unto the end of the age.”

Then turning to the parents I asked, “What is the name of your son?” “Thomas Christopher”<sup>1</sup>, they replied. “Thomas Christopher, I baptize you,” I said as I made the sign of the cross on his little forehead, “in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit..” Then quoting the apostle Paul’s words in his letter to the Romans, I continued: “In life may you live to the Lord and in death may you die to the Lord, so that in both life and death you will know that you belong to the Lord.”

Our reading from James, chapter 5, says in part, Call the elders of the church and ask them to pray...” Pray for the suffering and the sick. Pray for the forgiveness of sins--yours, the community’s and the sin of the world; the sin that divides us one from the other as well as from God. Let your prayer also include songs of celebration as you recall in God’s mighty acts of salvation in your life, the lives of others, and especially in the lives of those faithful ones that now dwell eternally in the Presence of the Eternal God.

One of the biggest fallacies that befalls our faith communities is the belief that Scripture is written to the individual as individuals. While Scripture may inspire individuals, all of Scripture is written to faith communities of which individuals are a part. Over the past several weeks we considered how James challenged the community then and now to take Jesus seriously; to embody the Spirit of the Risen Lord in the community and individual lives.

He challenged them to practice what they preached because the world is watching if the faith that we proclaim is lived out in our day to day lives. He challenged us to pray for wisdom. If any of you lack wisdom, let them ask of God for God is generous. But do not be double-minded for you will be like a rudderless ship upon the sea tossed this way and that. If you ask for wisdom believe that God will provide you with the wisdom at the time that you need it. Be bold in your faith.

James went on to say that wisdom is the combination of Faith plus Works. Faith and works are not inconsistent with one another, but they fit together like a hand in a glove. Show me your works and I will show you your faith. The two are inseparable. Be careful with your speech--your tongue. It is like a tiny flame. Words can warm a room or set a forest on fire. With our tongues we praise God from whom all blessings flow and curse our neighbor who is made in the very image of God. How can this be? he asked. Can a stream produce both sweet and brackish water at the same time? Any place where we find rumor and innuendo, jealousy and envy, or selfish ambition we will also find disharmony, chaos, and evil. Speech born of wisdom, though, shows itself by the fruit of purity and peace, gentleness and deference, mercy and the other sweet fruits of the Spirit that are untainted by hypocrisy

<sup>1</sup> Not his real name

Don't show partiality to the rich over the poor, the affluent over the impoverished. God identifies with the least, the last, the lost, and the lonely. Treat others as you would want to be treated. Realize that you are both a victim and beneficiary of circumstances largely, but not solely, beyond your control.

Beware of the love of money. Your salvation and ultimate security is not found in your job, 401k, portfolio or trusts. Over the last two weeks I have officiated at three funerals and in my 38 years of ministry I have officiated at nearly 500 funerals. I have yet to see a U-Haul attached to the back of a hearse. In our brief time here on earth remember that we have been entrusted to be trustees of God's creation. Despite what the world says, naked we came into this world and naked we shall leave. The day will come when we will have to give an account of how we used those things that God entrusted to our care. Beware of falling into the trap of building bigger barns for ourselves rather than being labors in the construction of God's Kingdom here on earth.

And finally, look out for one another. Have one another's back. If someone loses their way, go and find them. Walk with them until they "come to themselves" and find their way back home.

As this sermon series draws to a close, remember three things, if you remember nothing else; we're all in this together. No one gets out of life alive. And Life, real life, is found only in living in such a manner that God is glorified.

To God be the glory. Amen.