

SO JAMES IS TEACHING US HOW TO BE RICH AND POOR. HE FIRST ADDRESSES A WORD TO THE POOR. THAT WAS THE FIRST TRUTH. WHAT WE HAVE DOESN'T DETERMINE WHETHER WE HAVE THE KINGDOM. NOW A SECOND TRUTH. THE VALUE OF WHAT WE HAVE IS DETERMINED BY WHETHER WE HAVE THE KINGDOM.

NOW HE SPEAKS TO THE RICH: "LET THE LOWLY BROTHER BOAST IN HIS EXALTATION, AND THE RICH IN HIS HUMILIATION; BECAUSE LIKE THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS HE WILL PASS AWAY."

THAT IS A TOUGH WORD. ON THE SURFACE, IT MAY SEEM CONTRADICTIONARY—THE RICH ARE TO GLORY, OR TO BOAST, IN THEIR HUMILIATION.

THAT'S A CONTRADICTION, ISN'T IT—TO BOAST IN HUMILIATION? THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. "YES, ON THE HUMAN LEVEL. IT GOES AGAINST EVERY THING THE WORLD TEACHES US ABOUT THE POWER AND THE GLORY OF RICHES. BUT JAMES IS USING "KINGDOM" TALK, HIS PERSPECTIVE IS THAT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

IN THE KINGDOM, WHEN THE KINGDOM REALLY GETS HOLD OF US, WE RECEIVE A NEW SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE IN RELATION TO LIFE AND TO GOD. WE COME TO KNOW THAT LIFE IS A GIFT, THAT WE DON'T EARN THAT WHICH ENRICHES OUR LIVES. IT IS ALL GRACE.

IT'S INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE GREEK WORD TRANSLATED "HUMILIATION, IN VERSE 10, IS THE SAME ROOT WORD USED IN VERSE 9 TO DESCRIBE THE BROTHER WHO IS LOWLY. WHAT A TREMENDOUS INSIGHT! GOD HAS ASKED THE BROTHER WHO IS LOWLY TO GLORY IN HIS EXALTED STATE IN THE KINGDOM, WHILE HE ASK THE RICH MAN TO GLORY IN HIS HUMBLE ESTATE IN RELATION TO GOD.

HE IS PUTTING US ALL IN THE SAME PLACE IN RELATION TO GOD: POOR, IN THAT OUR NEED IS FOR GOD: RICH, IN THAT WE ARE OFFERED ALL THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S GRACE. YOU SEE, THE VALUE OF WHAT WE HAVE—EVEN OF WHO WE ARE—IS DETERMINED BY WHETHER WE HAVE THE KINGDOM.

THAT BRINGS US BACK TO THE BIG QUESTION, WHICH IS OUR THEME TO THE STUDY: HOW TO BE RICH AND POOR.

for today
THE ONE BIG LESSON IN THIS WORD OF JAMES IS, WE MUST REALIZE AND ACKNOWLEDGE OUR UTTER DEPENDENCY UPON GOD. NOW, MANY OF US RESIST THAT. WE ARE LIKE CHARLIE BROWN'S LITTLE SISTER SALLY.

SHE SAID TO CHARLIE IN ONE OF THE CARTOONS, "I'M DOOMED."

NEED TO WRITE A REPORT ON RIVERS, AND ~~IT'S~~ DUE NEXT WEEK AND I KNOW I'M GOING TO FAIL!"

CHSRLIE BROWN RESPONDED, "WELL WHY DON'T YOU WORK REAL HARD AND TURN IN THE BEST REPORT YOU CAN POSSIBLY WRITE?"

TO THAT SALLY MEEKLY REPLIED. "YOU KNOW, THAT NEVER OCCURED TO ME."

HAVE IT EVER OCCURED TO YOU THAT WE ARE UTTERLY DEPENDENT UPON GOD? JAMES MAKES THAT CASE ESPECIALLY STRONG AS IT RELATES TO THE RICH. HE KNOWS THAT THE GREAT PERIL OF RICHES IS THAT THEY TEND TO BRING US A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY. HAVING WEALTH CAUSES PEOPLE TO FEEL SAFE, TO FEEL THAT THEY HAVE RESOURCES TO COPE WITH ANYTHING THAT THEY CAN BUY ANYTHING THEY WANT, EVEN BUY THEMSELVES OUT OF ANY SITUATION THEY MIGHT WISH TO ESCAPE.

JAMES DRAWS A VIVID PICTURE, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY FAMILIAR TO THE PEOPLE IN PALESTINE. IN THE DESERT, IF THERE IS A SHOWER OF RAIN, THE THIN GREEN SHOOTS OF GRASS WILL SPOUT. YET ONE DAY OF BURNING SUNSHINE WILL MAKE THEM VANISH AS IF THEY HAD NEVER BEEN.

JAMES IS SAYING THAT AS THE GRASS AND FLOWERS WILT, AND THEIR BEAUTY COMES TO AN END WITH THE SCORCHING SUN, SO WILL THE RICH MAN FADE AWAY IN THE MIDST OF HIS PURSUITS."

THIS IS THE SAME MESSAGE THAT ^{ESV3} JAMES SOUNDED, IN HIS PARABLE OF THE SOWER, HE DESCRIBES THE SEED THAT FELL AMONG THE THORNS, BUT THE CARES OF THE WEOLD, AND THE DELIGHT IN RICHES AND THE DESIRE FOR OTHER THINGS, ENTER IN AND CHOKE THE WORD, AND IT PROVES UNFRUITFUL".

I HEARD RECENTLY OF A WOMAN WHO WENT INTO A COFFEE SHOP AND SAT DOWN, NOT DISTURBING THE GENTLEMAN SITTING AT THE SAME TABLE, SHE OPENED HER PURSE AND TOOK OUT A MAGAZINE AND STARTED TO READ. AFTER A BIT SHE REACHED FOR ONE OF THE COOKIES THAT WERE IN A BAG SITTING ON THE TABLE. AND WHEN SHE DID, THE MAN REACHED AND TOOK A COOKIE TOO. THIS MADE THE WOMAN ANGRY AND SHE GLARED AT HIM THOUGH HE TURNED AND SMILED VERY KINDLY AT HER.

MOMENTS LATER THE SAME THING HAPPENED AGAIN. SHE REACHED FOR A COOKIE AND HE REACHED FOR A COOKIE AT THE SAME TIME. IT MADE HER FURIOUS THAT HE SHOULD BE DOING THAT AND SHE GLARED AGAIN, THOUGH HE SIMPLY SMILED.