



Sunday, June 14, 2020
Pastor Don Denyes

Intro to James 4:11-17

Living in an age of social media, as we do, there are ample opportunities to “play God.” There is a temptation to glorify ourselves, to judge others, even to slander others. Of course, these temptations existed before social media—perhaps especially in the church! Our hearts are deceitful, who can understand them? Even when we know the truth about God, we still pretend as though we possess His authority and His wisdom.

Thus, when we approach a passage of Scripture like James 4:11-17, our hearts are laid bare. We see that we are given to these sinful tendencies, and we ought to humble ourselves (James 4:6), and recognize His sovereign will over us, and His unique role as Lawgiver and Judge. He alone will hold all of us accountable, so it is not for us to condemn anyone else. If Jesus Himself came into the world not to condemn it, but to save it, then we don’t need to concern ourselves with condemnation either.

Context

As Pastor Don noted, James is a very practical book. While most of Paul’s letters (and Peter’s and John’s for that matter) lay a foundation of gospel truth before moving to exhortation, James begins right with exhortation (1:2). Of course, there is theological foundation sprinkled in throughout his argument, but primarily the focus is on practical Christian living. Right before the passage for the sermon, James has exhorted us to humble ourselves that we might not quarrel the way we do. Right after, he exhorts the rich not to oppress others (in effect, play God towards them). Thus, James gives us much clarity when it comes not only to knowing where we must go, but knowing ourselves more truly to know from where we are beginning in the Christian life.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read James 4:11-17

“God Is God; We Are Not”

Playing God with Your Fellow Man

- Directive (11)

- Rationale (11-12)

- Question (12b)

Playing God with Your Future Plans

- Planning without God (13)

Reveals ignorance (14)

- Planning with God (15)

Failure to do so is sin (16-17)

Discuss

- 1) What are some common motivations behind slander?

- 2) If you were always conscious of the fact that only God is Lawgiver and Judge, how do you think that would impact your relationships with others?

- 3) When you make big decisions, what factors do you typically consider?

- 4) Pastor Don mentioned that making plans without God reveals a “practical atheism” in us, even as Christians. How can we overcome “practical atheism” in our lives?

- 5) What big decisions do you have coming up? How can we as a group help keep you accountable to make and hold those plans in a way that is consistent with James 4:13-17?