**“Meekness of Wisdom”**

Psalm 54

# Jeremiah 11:18-20

James 3:13—4:10

Mark 9:30-37

Pentecost 17, Sept. 18/19, 2021

From the book of James: “**Who is** wise and understanding among you? By his **good conduct** let him show his works in the **meekness of wisdom**.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

In **this life** we are encouraged to have an abundant amount of **self-esteem** and do a decent job of **self-promotion** so that we can **gain what we can**, **feeding** our self-image and getting the most of what’s available to us. **Self-esteem** and **self-promotion** are **different** and yet **fight for the same goal**. **Self-esteem’s** defined as the “holding of a **good opinion of** **oneself**” while **self-promotion** is “any attempt to enhance one’s position in **another’s eyes**”. Being good in **our own** eyes and successful attempts to improve our goodness in the eyes of **others** produces **pride**. And **people encourage us to become and be proud of ourselves**. **Self-esteem and pride is (most often) the goal**.

**Psychologists** and **marketers** are always too ready to help in that **quest**; and that quest is, **first**, an **internal one**. **Psychologists** suggest that we need to practice “**being positive** and **affirm ourself**” (“**patting ourself on the back with regularity**”). “**Develop things that you think you do well**” **and improve upon them, then GET NOTICED”**. As we’re quite fine with the **cosmic affirmation of God by gracious gift**, then, we’d not have that same quest … or it would be easy. Without that knowledge (and why that is), we’d have to **go that distance all on our own, and it would indeed be a quest**. Psychologists say that **practicing** **positive thinking** helps. **Practice, then / practice / practice** **positive thought and eliminate negative ones, and maybe you can capture esteem yourself**.

Once there, one can **market their self-exteem beyond themself**. One can **project** **what they’ve decided about themself** and hope that **others agree. But you’d a case for that agreement. You’d have provide some compelling evidence for the accuracy of the image you’d want believed**. And **looking and acting successfully-positive in public** is an actor’s trade. **Convinced ourselves about our image, though,** **convey it where people see it is easier once you’ve bought into it**. So, take compliments as if you’re “**not surprised by them**”. Find ways to **be proud of yourself** and **just reflect the pride that others think’s warranted in you**.

**Text**

To this our text in James says: “**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble**.” **Counter** to everything that we’re being made to think on this planet, God has **the opposite position** and **condemns the thing civilizations encourages**. Pride is the enemy God calls it, “earthly, unspiritual, and demonic where” (as the text says) “jealousies and selfish ambitions are developed to exist with all their boastings and deceptions” leading to “disorder and every vile practice”. God could not be more **counter-cultural** than what He says here of what **ought to be** **our quests and goals** **rather than** **what we’re encouraged to be more-naturally inclined toward**. The **enemy to our godliness** is not from **without**. It’s **our own ego … along with our desire to build our egos**.

Psychologists and marketers are going to hate that message. **You** might hate that message. The **disciples** didn’t, certainly, like that message. The end of one of their day’s walk had Him got them asked them about their energies during their walk. He had talked, but they didn’t listen. He had listened to them, however, but waited to respond to what He heard till evening. “What were you discussing on the way?” Jesus asked, but He knew. He just wanted them to **admit it**.

What they were not just discussing, but “**arguing about**”, was their **esteem to each other within the group**. Each vied for a **marketed prowess … “who was the greatest” among them was fought over with no shame**. Each wrongly assumed that Jesus ministry ushered in a kingdom (but of power upon the earth / a re-birth of the dynasty of King David and Solomon). They were wrong … and not God’s overall concern. Disciples, though, thought Jesus a future King needing Commanders, then a General from among the Commanders, so “who is wise and understanding among you?” Disciples (**like the world**) thought it the ones **most confident** and also **best suited by the vote of peers after hearing promotional speeches**.

But they hadn’t paid any attention to what Jesus said about **His duty in this world**. As they argued (and vied for position) He said: “’The Son of Man **is going to be** delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after three days He will rise’. But **they** didn’t **understand the saying** and **stayed afraid to ask Him**. So He set a child before them in the evening, and put him in the midst of them, and taking him into His arms, said, ‘Whoever receives **one such child in My name** receives Me (because **THAT, REALLY, IS ME AND MY PURPOSE … AND YOURS**), and whoever receives **who I really am (that way)**, receives not Me but Him who sent Me. If anyone would be **first** (in other words), he must be **LAST OF ALL AND SERVANT OF ALL**.” Jesus was **the child He set for them to see (Him accounted as NOTHING BUT SACRIFICE for the time in which He was speaking (OF NO ESTEEM NOR PROMOTABILITY WORLDLY-WISE / THE CHILD “IN HIS NAME”)**. And Jeremiah let the Lord talk about that: “**I was like a gentle Lamb led to the slaughter**. I **did not even know it was against Me that they devised their schemes, saying, ‘Let us destroy the Tree and its fruit, let us cut Him off from the land of the living, that His name be remembered no more. But that’s God’s Son / the Tree with the fruit that is life from His death)**. And **The Father will judge righteously and test the heart and mind and have vengeance upon those who don’t or won’t remember the name of Jesus’**” **He’s** the One of “good conduct, from James text, showing His works in the **Meekness of Wisdom**. **Wisdom is Jesus (from above), and He’s** **first** pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness **is sown in peace** by those (**Him**) who **makes peace**”. **Peace He** **brings by His sacrifice**. ….

**Jesus (and God’s expectations) are upside down to the world**. God will “**exalt the self-admitted humble**”. The **Good News** / the **wonderful news** is (**from** the humility of God’s Son offering Himself as sacrifice for the sins of pride’s payment) that **no one needs self-promotion nor SELF-ESTEEM**. **God EXALTS (GIVES HIS OWN SON’S ESTEEM0 to the humble / repentant sinner sorry for his lacking / his flawed ego, and He forgiving for the sake of Jesus’ humility**. **Esteem for a Christian, then, is not of ourself /** **not our own**, but **gifted “in Christ Jesus”, joined to HIS HUMILITY EXALTED BY THE FATHER**. **Baptized, we’re children of God because our brother is God’s Son**.

## Application

And **that’s** a message **Christian** **psychologists** and **marketers** have to really love. Human identity (not pride and personal boasting) is not in “**self**” but, rather, **in what God makes us in spite of our self**. He enables us (frees us) to be honest about ourselves (by ourselves) and not deceptively be self-promoting thankful for mercy, grace, and forgiveness in the acknowledgment of our lowliness in sin. We are **exalted** (and that’s **huge** **esteem** **word** and **promotion word**) by God because of a baptized and believing connection we have to God’s Son who became, Himself, the **lowliness** of men (all of humanity’s sinfulness heaped upon His shoulders).

In the arena of **godly encouragement**, **James provides it this way** (after **turning upside down the world and natural fallen inclinations with “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble”**), he tells us to (rather than scratching for self-esteem) **concern ourselves with this: first**, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”. “Draw near to God”, **second**, “and He will draw near to you”. **Third**, “Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your heart, you double-minded” (in other words, enjoy that you are baptized and remember that you are). And **fourth**, be always repentant: “wretched and mourn and week” for your sins. “let your” [inappropriate, arrogant, and haughty laughter be turned to mourning and your [mis-gotten] joy to gloom”. “Humble **yourselves** before the Lord” …….. then the great news: “and **He** will **exalt you**”.

In +Jesus’ name. Amen. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.