

Series – Part 20: How to Live as a Christian:

Talk Plainly and Pray Fittingly!

James 5:12-15 NIV

Sunday, September 15 at 8:00 & 10:45

Monday, September 16 at 7 PM

17th Sunday After Pentecost / 16th After Trinity – 2013

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, God has been speaking to us thru James to call us to **+**repent, **+**live as Christians, and **+**speak as people who know Jesus as our Savior. Today, we return to the theme of our speech. In chapter three James told us to tame our tongues; now we focus on *talking plainly* and *praying fittingly*. Those are *healthy ways* for us to function *as the body of Christ in this place!*

1. **Let Us Be Honest With Each Other:** ¹² **But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation [punishment].** // Think about Jesus’ strong words in today’s gospel reading (Matt. 23:16-22, 33-37).
 - a. There are many connections between *James* and *the Sermon on the Mount*: Jesus said: “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” (Matt. 5:37 NIV)
 - b. Believers are people of integrity: Think about these words of LTJ (Luke Timothy Johnson): “...the invocation of a special realm (whether heaven or earth) or power (the name of the Lord) to buttress one’s own speech becomes...an

admission that one's own speech is untrustworthy without such warrant" (341).

Therefore, *as believers – people of integrity*, we don't need to say: "Yes, *I swear to God.*" Our simple "Yes" is enough!

- c. Let us not condemn ourselves: Jesus said: "...as for...all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur..." (Rev. 21:8 ESV) Does Jesus' statement apply to *confirmed Lutherans* who have vowed "to hear the Word of God and receive the Lord's Supper faithfully" but do not? However, we are *not* being honest with the LORD and each other, *may the Almighty God move us to repent and rejoice in His forgiveness!*

2. **Let Us Remember and Pray**: Prayer is so easy, so powerful, and so readily available, but are we using it as a FIRST response? Here, in verse 13, James wrote to get the attention of believers who are in trouble or happy – *but are NOT yet praying or singing songs of praise!*

- a. Trouble: **13a** **Is any one** [τις] **of you in trouble** [suffering hardship or misfortune]? **He should pray.** // Whenever difficulties come into our lives it may be normal for us to seek relief by ♦phoning a friend or ♦searching the internet. Our difficulties can even lead us to ☹question God's love for us or ☹push Him away, but the BEST FIT for our difficulties is to *turn to the LORD in prayer!*
- b. Happiness: **13b** **Is anyone** [τις] **happy? Let him sing songs of praise.** // Whenever we are happy

– *when life is going well*, it's easy to forget about God. Subconsciously we may think: "I don't need Him right now." But the BEST FIT is to ♦ *see Him as the source of our happiness* and ♦ *respond to Him with a song/word of praise!*

3. **Let Us Care About Those Who Are Sick**: Why do we need such encouragement? LTJ wrote: "Sickness presents a profound challenge to the community of faith: will [the community] behave like friends of God or like friends of the world?" (342). What about us: *Are we visiting and praying for the sick?* LTJ went on to identify the two options: "Will the community [of believers] rally in support of the weak and show itself to be 'merciful and rich in compassion,' ...or will it recoil in fear and leave the sick person to progressive alienation?" (343).
- a. Praying and anointing: ¹⁴ **Is any one [τις] of you sick [or weak]? He should call the elders [πρεσβυτέρους – those who presided over the assembly of believers; also see this brochure: "A Word Study of Αρεσβύτερος and +πίσκοπος"] of the church [the assembly of believers] to pray over him ~~and anoint [having anointed] him with [olive] oil in the name of the Lord.~~ // Note the progression: (1) The sickness / weakness is acknowledged, (2) the elders are called (*some have been sick or hospitalized, but did not make that known*), (3) they come, (4) they anoint with oil, and (5) they pray.**
- i. "to pray over Him": "The phrase could mean either literally to pray 'over' the...sick person or to direct the prayer

‘towards’ the sick one...” (LTJ, 332).

Therefore, whether we are present with the sick person or not, *let us pray!*

- ii. “**having anointed**”: Is the oil magic? LTJ wrote: “The oil gains its real power from the touch of human hands that apply it, that reach across pain and loneliness and reestablish communion” (343). I have oil and will travel to *anoint and pray!*

- b. Healing and forgiveness: **15** **And the prayer offered in faith** [1:5-7, *Ask in Faith*] **will make the sick** [*or weak*] **person well; [and] the Lord will raise him up. [And] If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.** // Sometimes in the Bible a condition is NOT related to sin – *like the man born blind (John 9:1-3)*, but other times it is – *like people who receive the Lord’s Supper without repentance*, which can result in physical weakness, sickness, and even death (1 Cor. 11:27-30). We tend to focus on *physical* rather than *spiritual* sickness – *look at our BLC prayer list*, but what is more important – *the temporal or the eternal?* Let us pray for people in both ways!

Conclusion: We can and should pray, but Jesus is the Great Physician – *the Healer of body and soul!* In both cases we are undeserving, *but He is full of mercy!* So let us **+**trust in Him, **+**pray for others, and **+**give Him thanks for every blessing of body and soul! And all God’s people said: **Amen!**