

9-20-2009,
Chapelwood UMC, Lake Jackson

Am I There Yet?
James 3:13-4:3, 7-8

This month we are looking at the book of James. Pastor Wesley spoke the first Sunday about being quick, slow, slow – much like dance steps, the steps of a life of faith. Quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. Last Sunday, we took a look at James again to see what he says about the words we speak. We can use our words to damage or delight.

Let's take a look at what James may say to us today.

This week I was speaking to a good friend, who was in seminary with me. She was talking about the home where she and her husband live is the 24 home for her. In wondering how many places I have lived, I told her "Ok, you're on, I'll count them up." Well, I discovered that with our home here in Lake Jackson, I have lived in 29 places. That's a lot of moves. Whether we are moving homes, or taking a vacation, we often ask "Are we there yet?" We want to know if the long journey is over, if we have reached our destination. We sometimes ask this question about our faith.

But James is not asking the question, "Are We There Yet?" He is asking about our conversion. James is not speaking to those who are in the "world" and have a life of evil and ill-repute. He is addressing the Christian community, those people who have professed their faith in Jesus Christ, but whose attitudes and actions are not yet fully in line with God. The words are written to those who are gathered in the name of Jesus Christ, it is written to us.

So, how do we know when we are there? ...when we have reached the height of our faith?

We sometimes think of our conversion as an once-in-a-lifetime event. "Now, I've done it. I've made my commitment and I'm finished. I just go about my merry way." Conversion is not a first commitment, it is a lifetime of moving closer to Christ.

Why are you here today? Dave and I talked about worship this week and what is the meaning of worship. Why do we come here each week? And can we just stay home and worship God? I believe there are some people who can earnestly worship God alone, but it will lack the joy (and the messiness) of being with the body of believers. The walking beside each other and struggling with our encounters in life, help us along our faith journey. We need each other. But I also

believe that there are people who come to church on Sunday mornings who are not of the mind to worship our Savior. The prayers, the thoughts, they may be focused more on their wants, than a connection with our living God. I believe every Sunday morning should be a continuation of our conversion, as well as other days of the week. When we gather together, with those people we love the most, and with those across the room that we haven't loved so much, than we should be changed people. We are to be converted again to God's infinite love, the love that he desires for us to have with each other. If we leave here with the same grudges, the same misunderstandings, the same judgments of others that we came in with, then we have not been converted. We are shaped continuously by the hand of God, when we allow the Holy Spirit to move within us. Our conversion continues daily. The question to ask is, "Am I There Yet?" The answer is, "No." James gives us a deeper look at how our joys and our struggles can bring us closer to Christ.

How awesome to be able to worship God, and then earnestly seek for our lives to be different. This is how our conversion continues over our entire lifetime. The conversion formula is simple, vs 8: "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you." God is right beside you, just turn into the arms of God.

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