



## July 31, 2022

# Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast

### Wisdom in “The Letter of James”

*“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. (3:13-15)*

### “James” as Wisdom Literature

“James” is a letter in form: it has a greeting, refers to its readers often as “brothers,” and identifies its author by name. However, it is a letter in form only. There are no greetings to persons by name, and there is no mention of the circumstances of author or readers, like other letters in the New Testament. “James” is another type of literature: *paraenesis*, or ethical instruction. It is more like traditional wisdom books in the Bible, as it offers wisdom about how to live a good life.

The author of “James” certainly was familiar with the traditional wisdom scripture, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and so forth. As we read “James,” we hear familiar words and passages, and we are likely to think, “I’ve heard this before...but I can’t place it.” We might even be surprised by hearing echoes of “The Sermon on the Mount!”



### How “James” Came to be in the Bible

“The Letter of James” was slow to be accepted into the Bible we know today. It was officially listed among the Scripture to have binding authority in 367 AD. However, during the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, Martin Luther moved James (and other works) to the end of the New Testament because “it lacked essential elements of the Gospel.” Luther even questioned whether it should be in Bible at all! Others, like John Calvin, disagreed, declaring that “James” had theological value, and so “James” remained in the Bible.

### What are the Major Themes of “James”?

Reading “James” is like reading one of the Old Testament wisdom books: it is not organized like a story but rather goes from one topic to another, often without regard to chapter numbers. The major themes we encounter are: consistency of the Word and action (1:22-2:13); faith and works (2:14-26); proper speech (3:1-18); relationships with others and God (4:1-12); coming judgment (4:13-5:9); and responsibility toward others in the community (5:10-20).

### You Should Read “James”

Seriously! If you haven’t recently read “James” or don’t remember reading it, sit down with it and read it in one sitting. It is a short book, like reading five pages in a paperback. You will be surprised and perhaps challenged by some of the wise instruction you find in this short book! Also, “James” is probably best known for discussing one of the major concerns of the early AND contemporary church: “Faith vs. Works.” (2:14-26)

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**Let us keep in our prayers:** pray for those suffering from extreme weather, especially those in the mid- and south-west suffering from record-breaking heat; those impacted by recent floods the in south, especially Kentucky; all who are suffering from disease and hunger. Lord, hear our prayer!