**The Epistle of James – Week One**

James 1:1-18

The Epistle of James is thought to have been written by the half-brother of Jesus, who led the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem for nearly 30 years after the resurrection, until, according to the secular historian Josephus, he was martyred by stoning at the hands of the Sanhedrin (Jewish ruling council) in A.D. 62.

1. Trace James’ change of heart concerning Jesus in John 7:2-5, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, and Acts 15:12-21. How does this insight into James affect your reading of James 1:1? What do you learn about him and about his epistle?
2. Read v.2-4.

The last word in verse 3 is from the Greek word ‘hupomone’ – patient endurance, steadfastness, perseverance. Literally, the word is “to live, tarry, dwell under.” The working of your faith is said to produce this ability to live and bear up, and even to flourish, under situations of duress.

Think of a time when you experienced endurance in a difficult situation. How would you describe this experience of endurance?

In verse 2, James says to consider it ‘joy’ to undergo trials. It is foreign to human nature to know joy in the midst of trial. Feelings of sadness or happiness come according to circumstance, but joy is different, deeper than feeling.

How can a joyful action toward someone in the midst of trial remind them of a deeper reality that brings joy?

Verse 4 says that we will grow to be “lacking in nothing.” What kinds of things might you lack in the midst of suffering? What does each of these things have to do with endurance?

1. Read v.5-12.

In our sermon on these verses, Pastor Gabe pointed out that wisdom in the midst of suffering teaches us to release our grip on things that fade, and forces us to stare into beautiful, hopeful, eternal truths.

From these verses, what are these truths? What reasons do we have to hope in the midst of trials?

1. Read v.13-18.

The question of suffering in, “Why?” It is tempting to find reasons for suffering. What are some reasons, perhaps bad reasons, that you have heard people give for circumstances of trial, pain, illness, death? How are these reasons contradicted by verse 17?

How does the reality of constancy in the Father bring comfort? What is constant?

Verse 18 says that the Father exercised his will, not to tempt us, but, through the word of truth (the Gospel of Christ), to “bring us forth,” that is, to create an eternal life in us that comes from faith in Christ. How does living out this life of faith in the midst of trial bring life to others?