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Seed of Peace

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said this in Matthew 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers for they are the ones that God will call his children.” To be a child of God is to be a peacemaker. To be a peacemaker is to be a child of God. Peace is created by good and harmonious relationships between humans. Do you agree with this statement? But if we do not have inner peace, we cannot create harmony with others because there are always evil powers in the air. That is the reality. In today's scripture, James chapter 3, we come to a passage that tells us how to live in harmony with each other. It guides us on how to build peaceful relationships, which involves being wise in our treatment of others. Let's explore those elements.

James 3:13 states *“If you are a truly wise and understanding person, it will be seen in your life by the good deeds that you do out of the humility that always comes from wisdom.”* The first sign of wisdom is humility, as wisdom resides in humble hearts. I remember that I talked about wisdom. Wisdom is like a living person. Wisdom chooses where to enter. It enters the heart of a humble person, never to the heart of the arrogant and the proud. So humility is an essential qualification to receive the wisdom. If I act in a prideful way at any time, it means that I'm being foolish, I'm not being wise at all. If you are selfish, jealous, or bitter toward others, then of course you are not wise at all, because wisdom never enter your hearts.

James 3:17-18 says first this: *“Real wisdom...”* That's the wisdom from God. *“...is pure, then peaceful, then considerate.”* *“Real wisdom is submissive, full of mercy and helpful, and impartial and sincere or without prejudice and without hypocrisy.”* Now, this last verse, verse 18, it is so loaded with truth. *“When peacemakers plant seeds of peace, they will harvest justice.”* It is vital to understand that peace and justice are interconnected. Without justice, true peace cannot be achieved. In the original Chinese language, the word for peace, Pyong Wha, symbolizes everyone having an equal right to food. Therefore, peace cannot exist without justice. Planting seeds of peace will yield justice, which will be further discussed in other sermon. Today, the focus will be on preparing oneself internally for peace, ultimately leading to justice.

Every day, in every relationship, you are planting seeds. The question is, what kind of seeds are you planting in your relationships? Are you sowing seeds of anger or distrust? Are you planting seeds of impatience or fear, criticism or other negative traits? Whatever seeds you sow, you will reap. That is why it is important to consider whether you will have good or bad relationships, peaceful or conflicted ones.

1 James provides the answer in verse 17, stating that real wisdom is pure. **This means always telling the truth** and not lying with evil intentions, taking advantage, or misleading others in a

relationship. Trust is foundational in relationships and is built upon truth. Trust cannot exist without truth.

Scott Peck, a Christian psychiatrist, wrote in his book "People of the Lie" that people have a tendency to lie. They are unwilling to confront the inherent evil within themselves, refuse to acknowledge the wrongdoings they commit, and often try to justify their actions with excuses like Narcissism. Dr. Leonard Keeler, the inventor of the lie detector, concluded after extensive experiments that all human beings are by nature deceitful. God doesn't want us to stay that way. That's why in Ephesians 4:15 he says, The Message, *"God wants us to grow up to know the whole truth and to tell it in love."*

2 Number two, if I'm wise, I won't antagonize your anger. I won't compromise the truth, but I also won't antagonize your anger by the way I tell it. Second phrase in James 3:17 says this: **"Real wisdom is peaceful."** Not just pure, it's peaceful.

3 The Bible states, **"Real wisdom is considerate."** Another translation says, "Real wisdom is courteous." Real wisdom is gentle with people. One common mistake we often make in all types of relationships - whether in marriage, friendship, at work, at school, or with our neighbors - is that if someone does not feel the same way we do, we tend to believe their feelings are invalid, illogical, or unimportant.

This can lead to serious racial issues in society. If you do not share the same fears or concerns as someone else, it does not mean their feelings are not significant. If you have never experienced unfair treatment due to your skin color, if no one has ever mistreated you or made you feel less than human because of your skin color, and if you have never feared for your safety while jogging down the street, then you may struggle to understand why people are protesting, as it is not a part of your world. However, this does not mean their experiences are not real, valid, or painful.

When someone tries to express how fearful, heartbroken, or angry they are about a deep, painful wound, how do you respond? "Yes, but what about...?", which invalidates their feelings and pain by bringing up other problems. How should you respond? The best response is to simply sit and listen to their pain with an open heart. You may not feel it because you didn't experience it. What would you do? Showing empathy is crucial by listening carefully. Absorbing their pain in that moment is an act of love and wisdom.

4 **True wisdom is not defensive.** The biblical reference of James 3:17 discusses the meaning of "eupeithes," which literally translates to being open. According to the Living Bible, being open involves allowing discussion and being willing to yield to others' perspectives. You are open to discussion. You are willing to be persuaded. A wise individual can learn from anyone.

5 James 3:17, the next phrase says, “**Real wisdom, God's wisdom is full of mercy and it's helpful.**” It's full of mercy, it's forgiving, it's gracious, and it's helpful. Proverbs 17:9 says this, Living Bible, *Love forgets mistakes*. Love doesn't have record of wrong. That's what is wise to do in a relationship, to forget mistakes.

6 The next important step for creating peace in all your relationships is to not disregard our differences. One of the major causes of conflict in both marriage and other relationships is the expectation that others should think, feel, act, have the same priorities, outlook, and perspective as ourselves. The issue lies in the fact that we are not accepting others for who they truly are but rather trying to mold them into who we want them to be. This attitude leads to conflict, unhappiness, and disaster. The remedy is simply to acknowledge our own biases, judgments, and prejudices, which is why James 3:17 states, “**Real wisdom is free from prejudice and hypocrisy.**”

In Greek theater thousands of years ago, one actor would often play multiple roles wearing different masks. He would appear on stage with one mask to play a specific character, then switch masks backstage and return as a different character. This process would continue throughout the performance. The actor wearing several masks are said as the *hypocritas* - a person who does not reveal their true self. Who are you? We cannot truly know ourselves until we have our true self, our inner self, in Jesus!

Wise people, the Bible says, are *adiakritos* which means free from prejudice. They don't despise differences. Every person in the world has prejudices because they are shaped by their culture. Prejudices run deep in every human being, sometimes without us even realizing it. This demonstrates the severity of our problem.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian people were unfairly blamed as the source of the virus because it originated in China. At that time there were an average 3800 hate crimes against Asian Americans occur each month. This led to a surge with over 6,600 occurring each month in 2021 in the United States alone. What do you think it as a Christian? Rather we should embrace and celebrate differences – different cultures, races, and histories. Wise individuals recognize God's wisdom in creating us all uniquely.

How would you rate yourself on James' wisdom test? I need more wisdom. We all know that we need more wisdom. **Colossians 2:3 says: "The secret to wisdom is Christ himself. In him are all of God's hidden treasures of wisdom."** So, the first step is to link ourselves to Jesus. Because Jesus is wisdom. When our soul is united with Jesus, we will naturally embody the truth of James in our hearts and live it out. We can receive the thoughts and feeling of Jesus. If you want peace in your relationships and in the world, the starting point is to abide in the Lord. Let wisdom rule your heart, and you rest in peace.