

It's an honor to be invited to preach here at First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley. And my wife Shirley sends her greetings, she wishes she was here too, but she has so much fun memories of anyone of you and so many of you in these congregation today. She has a health incident in the spring, blood clot on her brain and it was a scare but she is on the mend and she is way ahead of the curve, and it slowdowns some of the long distance traveling on what we are doing for a while, but she is doing so well and it's exciting and so she sends her greeting and we love you. And I want you to know that we pray for this congregation, she prays every single Sunday for this congregation and all the churches we ever been in, we are at the Union Church of Manila and Berkeley Church and national church and university church and Berkeley church.

I am also excited that I've been invited to be part of these series on the book of James. And I have a text and this text in the first chapter of James is actually an amazing text, James gives us 2 words in that text that are just virtues, James wants; evidently those people that receives this letter from James who was a bishop of Jerusalem, the brother of our Lord who wrote these amazing book, the book of James and he has 2 words that he wants those folks to know and both of them are in these texts. In fact the very first verse of the text in James 1:9 the word is introduced to us, "Let the believer who is lowly in heart (lowly-that's the word that means humble in the bible) and James wants humility to happen to the people that are going to get this letter". This general apostles being sent to the early church, humble. Lowly – is

word that the lord himself, Jesus use this word in one of the most marvelous text we have on Matthew, we're Jesus says "Come in to me all you labor in our heavy laden and I will give you pause or I will give you space, take my yolk upon you and learn from me, for I am humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls, take my yolk upon you, my yolk is easy and my burdens light" that I amazing promise from our lord, the word humble is in that word and that wonderful promise.

And then the other word, the other words is the very last word of out text today, and I just love how the King James Bible Translates for us the last sentence of our text, which is James 1:21. I don't the like the new RSV rendering because it seems so stark and so

brutal but therefore read yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness and welcome with meekness the implanted word that the power, that has power to save your souls. Here is the King James Bible and very often the King James Bible has the best rendering there is, lay apart all filthiness and super fluidly of naughtiness –like that better. Did you ever hear it better? Say that to your kids sometimes lay that side of super fluidly of naughtiness and with meekness receive the engrafted word which is able to save your souls.

Well there is the 2nd word that James is very concern to teach us, humility –the 1st verse of our text, lowly, humility, humble and meekness. Well Jesus loves that word too, in fact that word appears in the third

be attitude. You know our Lord's beatitudes are the 9 blessings in Matthew 5, blessing in the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, now the third (listen to this) blessed are the meek. Do you know what the meek means? In the first century world in the Greek world, meekness is used in a special way and our Lord knows that. It's used to refer to animals especially horses that are trainable. Trainable horse is a meek horse, not weak, that's why I don't like it when people talk about, 'I want you to be meek and mild' that's the wrong combination of words it should be meek and strong because the meek horse is the trainable horse and when your trainable or teachable then you become a strong horse, you become a great horse and that's use of that word, in classical Greek it's almost exclusively to refer to animals as trainable or teachable and our Lord uses

that word, that wonderful word in Matthew 5, that beatitudes the 3rd beatitude, blessed are the meek. And by the way you know every beatitude has a reward, blessed are the poor in spirit, there is a King of Heaven, blessed are those who mourn they will be comforted. Do you know what 3rd one is? Blessed are the meek, they will inherit the earth.

You want to solve the global warming? Be teachable. Be teachable then you will solve great problems and our Lord gives that as the 3rd beatitude and James. By the way people think the book of James is in a certain sense of commentary by James on our Lord's sermons on the mountain and it could well be because he uses all the language of the sermon on the mount in the book of James, first the

word lowly which our Lord uses when he says
'Come to me all you who you labor in heavy laden,
learn from me, I am lowly, I am humble.' So humble
and meek go together, I am humble and take my
yolk and learn me, yolk is easy, my burdens like, I
am humble and so humble is the first word and then
in the very end of his text, after the naughtiness, be
meek and learn from the word and then your souls
will be save alright?

Know with that lets a take a look with at the journey
through this text that I have been assigned for today
which I love by the way, thank you for signing me
this text. Alright hold your breath here we go, James
the first chapter, first the word lowly, alright let's
look at that word and see how it works. Let the

believer the brother and sister who is lowly (in other words, humble) boast of being raised up. Actually the word for boast there is one of the most glorifying words and really the best translation of that opening sentence 'let the humble discover the glory of their dignity' because then the word for highest is used. So the RSV translate it 'let the believer who is lowly boast or see the glory of the best translation of being raised up and the word 'Hestia' is being raised up means to find his full dignity, you find your full dignity from humility he says, so let the believer who is lowly humble, discover the glory of his full dignity. And then he repeats it, this is parallel, in Hebrew it was said twice, now it's done with regards to the rich and the word for rich here is the Greek word 'Plenty' and let those who are plenty, the rich, let them be humble and the same word is used for

humble, I'm sorry the revised is being brought low, but actually it is the same word 'teparow' which means humble, the same word that he use for the lowly, let the rich become lowly and discover the glory of their dignity. It's meant to be a parallel so let the humble person discover the glory of their dignity and who they are, let the rich person discover the glory of their dignity by being humble he puts him together and then he gives an observation which we heard earlier in the early part of the service for the sun raises with its scorching heat and withers the field and the flower flows, beauty perishes in the same way, richness in the mist of busy life will also wither. So you'd better be humble and discover the full structure of your dignity because all these possessions and rich things, the plenty's will tend wither like the field will withered from the sun.

(That's only an observation that James gives) then he faces up to the fact that, you as a believer are going to be tested and he uses one word here that in the new testament is sometimes translated test and it's the word 'Parle' sometimes translated 'tempt' but we get the English word Parle from this. 'You kind of put in Parle when you are tested, like you get a midterm exam in school, that's a paralleled test and so he doesn't look at it in a bad way, noticed versed 12, 'Blessed is anyone who endures the test who endures temptation and such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life, that's a word use to refer to an athletic crown 'you will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised for those who love him.' And then backs up and James says 'No one when tempted should ever say, I am being tempted by God.' Same word 'Parle' 'I am not being

Parle by God, for God cannot be tempted (now there's the 4th used of that word Parle) by evil and he himself tempts no one'. So his talking about the testing that can happen and he says, when you are tested, Parle is not by God tempting you. So then he explains what temptation is, and it's interesting in this text, he is not talking about the temptation by the devil. Later in the end of the book they will mention how the devil a tempter is and we should flee from that temptation but he is not talking about the devil tempting is, his talking about ourselves and our desires tempting us. So he says 'When one is tempted by his own desire, being lured and in ties by it then when the desire has conceived and gives birth to sin, and when that sin is fully grown give birth to death so don't be deceived when you are tempted by your own desires.' So right here, James is saying, he

wants us to be humble and then will find our full structure and then when rich be humble will find our full structure alright, temptation is going to hit everyone, everyone is going to be tested, now in that test God is not tempting us with Parle and putting us in Parle it's a testing that happens, now the worst testing is what would be calling temptation is when we are tested by our own desires that make us create myths about who we are in other words notice that's against the humble, the man date to be humble is now. I am going to create a myth about my strength in my own power and he warns us against that. And at the end of that paragraph, don't be deceived by that.

By the way I have to tell you that we are deceived in such an interesting word in the New Testament, it is the Greek word, 'Plano' which is translated to be deceived or swindled. It's used in 1st John so don't be deceived anyone who says I have no sin, deceives himself and that word is the word 'Plano'. Plano is again an interesting first century word but it comes from first century astronomy, you know before Copernicus, there was a false idea that everybody believed all the ancient astronomers believed it too that we the earth was a center and all of stars went around us cause it looks like that. The sun goes around us, it looks like that. The moon goes around us that are true. But the sun looks going around us and the stars look like they are all moving around us. So the ancient astronomers bought into that until Copernicus showed that it was not true, we are not

the center that everything goes around us, it's around the fact goes around the sun. But the early astronomers did get one thing right, when they looked into the sky and they saw the stars, they realize there we're two kinds of stars, there we're stars that twinkled and there are stars that didn't twinkle. Have you ever notice that? And then they also notice that the stars that didn't twinkle we're moving all the time. Mars they named them, Venus, Mercury, Pluto, they are no one twinkling stars. Well of course maybe they didn't realize they are just reflecting light from the sun, see cause they are in our solar system, but they we're moving but the stars that twinkled didn't move around us, that's why if you're a sailor you should set your sexton to the north star on the big deeper not Venus who know where you'll go if you're following Venus as you're

compass, and even the earliest astronomers figured that out, the twinkling stars are reliable, the north star will always be north on the south of your equator, the southern cross, it will stay put, but the none twinkling stars are going to move everywhere and guess what word they give to the none twinkling stars 'Planets, Plano' they are deceiving you. And that is the Greek idea of deceive comes they are tricking you they make you think that they are moving around us (well they are moving around us) but they make you think that they are great stars but they're not, they don't twinkle. Look for the twinkling ones, and we will call those, stars but we'll call those none twinkle ones, planets. And that's where the idea of deception came in the New Testament when they talk about, 'don't be deceived' don't be tricked by something that looks grant.

(Wow! Think all the books written about Venus, is that marvelous or if you love warm think all of the books written about Mars, oh that's wonderful, the God of Wars) But they are all moving around and they're deceptive. And now James, uses that very same word, listen 'When you use your own desire, as your compass and that is not humble', which you are going to find the truth from God, you do it for yourself you're going to have a planet that you are building your life on and you then you pick one, it could be Venus, it could be Mars, it could be Pluto, you pick it, but it's not going to be reliable, it's going to move over the place, don't direct your ship by it, believe me you will be on trouble. So he says, notice how James puts it, James is very earthy, I love the way says it here, he says, so our desires tempt us but do not be deceived my beloved and then comes

wonderful positive passage ‘every generous act of giving, every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change and he stays, it stays twinkling, in fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures and that’s his high dignity, that comes from humble.’ Notice it’s all tying into humble. When your humble you see the light that is coming down from God’s height to us, not that we are high and have the light that comes down, but the light that comes down to us and we humbly discover it and then he must understand this my beloved, let everyone be quick to listen slow to speak, slow to anger and then comes that great line from the King James Bible ‘Lay up a part all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive

with now, meekness, be teachable, with meekness.’
The word of the Lord and that will save you.

And so he puts it two together, humble and meek.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer love that did I bring my
Dietrich Bonhoeffer up here? There it is, I left it
behind. Hey! Thank You. When I teach a new
college here, I always have somebody that watches
all the things that I’m leaving behind. Dietrich
Bonhoeffer wrote a marvelous essay after 10 years.
It was after 10 years, they are all gone through is the
young confessing Christians in 1943 he wrote this
that after 10 years he has this 1 great paragraph, he
says ‘the remains and experience of incorruptible
value for us’ he says ‘we have learned to see great
events world history from below, it’s from below’

that is our Lords teaching on lowly, on humble from below, this prospective from below must not become a particular possession of those who are internally dissatisfied, rather we must do justice to life and all of these dimensions from a higher satisfaction, from below will see the higher satisfaction, who's foundation is beyond any talk from below or from above. And notice Dietrich Bonhoeffer is doing exactly what James did, those are wealthy, learn to come down and learn from below, we look up. It's a better perspective when you look up than you look down. So it's not whether you look up from above or from below, the deception the 'Plano' deception is when I think more of myself than I should think and that is the way Dietrich Bonhoeffer says 'we have been learned, that the value of seeing things from below' and that is this case below, from humility.

Notice not only for the poor. By the way do you know that there is a different word for economic for poverty in the New Testament, this is not a word for economic poverty, this word 'lowly' is a word that describing a character, a lowly character a humble character, there is another word, there is another word 'economic depredation' and the bible cares a lot about 2 poverty/economic. But this is talking about your character, let your character be humble, look from below and if your rich look from below, do the same thing its parallel, do it. And you will then see the glory. By the way glory means the manifestation, you will see your dignity and you will see the high dignity that God has given you. It is an amazing thing and then comes the Parle –the temptation you're going to always be tempted you will always going to be tested and then... when you

are tested by your own desires and those desires take over your life, then that is a 'Plano' that's a deception and it has a bad effect don't let it happen to your life, get your eyes on the north star, your eye on the star that twinkles, your eyes on the light that comes from above and be in teachable place where you can learn and that's how the book of James begins, it's not a bad book for our generation right now either. It's not a bad theme, 2 wonderful virtues for us today.

Heavenly father, thank you for this great text, thank you that James starts of his book and with grace and it is a grace that when we are lowly, when we look from below instead of trying to find a place where we can look from above, that Lord then, mix with

teachableness with meekness, we have the
experience of seeing God's light shine, so Lord
thank you for that, may that be true to all of our lives
in Christ name we pray. Amen.