

Hello everyone, in case you don't already know me or are visiting today, my name is Joshua Pugsley; I'm the youth director at Wildwood Church. Today is graduation Sunday when we take some time to acknowledge the new chapter that our Highschool graduates are about to embark on. It's always a privilege for me to preach this particular Sunday; I hope that in some small way I can encourage these graduates along with everyone else. Our text today is James 4:13-17 and I believe that Lord willing, he has a lot to teach us. Let's pray for open hearts to receive his word.

We all make plans, everyday we make plans. Where to go, what to eat, who to spend time with and so on. About 4 or 5 year ago I had a plan, my plan was simple, have a fantastic relaxing Saturday.

I still lived in Jefferson City, Missouri at the time and it was one of those extremely hot and sweltering summer days. My wife Delilah was off at a Women's breakfast for our church and I had just awoken from a wonderful slumber. It was somewhere around 9:30am when I made my way down stairs. I started my morning doing a few chores and then I took out the trash. When I approached the door to reenter my house I discovered to my dismay that I had accidentally locked the door behind myself. Panic struck a chord in my heart; I was outside in my pajamas with no phone and no wife to let me. But I collected myself, I wasn't going to let this damper my mood on such a wonderful Saturday morning! It was already around 10am and Delilah would be home in about an hour from breakfast, so no worries. I'll just go to the front of my house, sit under the shade of our porch and pray. I prayed for a while and thought, Delilah will be back soon, I'll just relax and think about life...more time passes. Delilah will be back anytime now...the breakfast should be over now and she's probably just helping to clean up. More moments pass, anger begins to creep in as minute after minute of my amazing Saturday plans of relaxing in an airconditioned home drift away. Where is my wife!

Bear in mind, I have no idea exactly how long I've been waiting because I have no phone to check the time and I didn't have a watch on, but it had to have been at least a good couple of hours. So I'm getting desperate to say the least, I check windows, I find a bobby pin on the ground and attempt some lockpicking for a good 20 minutes, but to no avail. Hope is dwindling quickly as I waste away in the summer heat sweating and trapped outside. I sit there under the porch, angry at myself, but still thinking that at any moment Delilah would arrive to rescue me from my anguish. I've considered going to the neighbors to borrow their phone, but at this point I'm not that desperate, I just don't want to show up at someone's door in my sweat soaked pjs, plus Delilah will be back anytime.

I begin praying again, this time for relief! Lord help me, get me out of here. Then I hear a vehicle pulling into our driveway, but it's not Delilah, it's UPS. I hope they aren't coming to our door, that would be really awkward just sitting out here in my pjs covered in sweat. No they are, the UPS woman is coming right towards me. The woman shows up and I say hello, trying to seem like it's normal for me to be outside in the extreme heat with my sweat soaked pjs. She says hi back with a weird look and asks if I'm Joshua Pugsley to which I respond in the affirmative. She hands me a large amazon box and is on her way.

I open the box, oh my! It's manna from heaven! There's coconut water, a booklet with scripture, toilet paper, and other irrelevant stuff I don't remember. My hope is renewed! I can wait a little longer! Delilah will be home soon! I can just relax, read some scripture, and drink some coconut water! Oh and wait, we have like five tiny strawberries from our failed strawberry plant that I can go eat. I can do this! So I have a little lunch for myself, read a bit of scripture and then use the toilet paper as a cushion to take a little nap. Time goes on no Delilah, I have to use the bathroom, no Delilah, I'm dieing in the heat, no Delilah, I throw a tantrum no delilah. I finally break, I go to my neighbors house knock on the door, and explain the situation looking somewhat like a person who just escaped an asylum. Fortunately the neighbor lets me borrow their phone. I called Delilah, no answer. So I called the Landlord.

Hey Andrew, it's Josh, hey I locked myself out, would you mind uh coming by and letting me in. In about 30 minutes, okay sounds good. 10 minutes after that phone call Delilah pulls in. Delilah ended up going out with the Ladies after the breakfast to do some shopping and by the time I got back inside our home it was 4pm. I had just spent around 6 hours outside, so there goes my saturday...

My plans didn't work out. Of course this is a funny example of plans not working out, there are more tragic stories that could be told. A couple plans on having children, but they aren't able. A father plans on providing for his family, but a crisis happens and all the money he's saved disappears. A Mother plans on preparing healthy meals every evening, but life is so busy that it doesn't happen as often as she'd like. The college student plans on being successful but the job market is brutal and they end up working a job they didn't go to school for. Some people don't even have the luxury of some of these kinds of plans, some peoples plans are to just get a meal for the day. We can plan all we want, but that doesn't mean all plans come to fruition, the Lord is the one who establishes our steps.

Proverbs 16:9 The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps. -

We don't have control over our life, God has control. You don't have to take my word for it, our passage in James makes this very clear for us.

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. - James 4:13-17

Planning is a part of life. The old adage says that if you fail to plan you plan to fail. It's a true statement. If you want to do anything worthwhile in life you have to make plans, you won't get anywhere without it. James in this passage is addressing a group of merchants, whether they're

an illustrative group or they are actually people James knows about, it's debatable, it's probably both. Regardless, the livelihood of merchants in James day revolved around intricate planning. They had a lot of details to sort out if they were going to make the profits they needed to. Planning and making profits isn't the problem in today's passage, there is nothing inherently wrong with doing either. The problem is the heart behind the planning and the profits. James is speaking against the arrogant and presumptuous attitudes of anyone who makes plans in a way that does not acknowledge God.

The world would have us believe that we are the masters of our own fate. The mantra they proclaim says you are the decider of your destiny, you can map out your life to achieve your aspirations. It's an easy belief to get wrapped up into, because it places us in a position of control, it allows us to feel like we have some power over how our lives go, but according to our passage it isn't true. We have no ultimate control over our lives. We don't even know what tomorrow will bring! Yet beginning at a young age the world is trying to indoctrinate us with the idea that we are captains of our future. Hear these first few texts from the famous Dr. Seuss book, "Oh the places you'll go".

Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You're off to Great Places!
You're off and away!

You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself
any direction you choose.
You're on your own. And you know what you know.
And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go.

You'll look up and down streets. Look 'em over with care.
About some you will say, "I don't choose to go there."
With your head full of brains and your shoes full of feet,
you're too smart to go down any not-so-good street.

The message in this dr. Seuss' book is clear, you determine the steps you will take, you're the one in charge and you're smart enough to choose the right paths. It may seem like a silly children's rhyme but in reality it's a dangerous ideology that ignores God's sovereignty over all things and it is this type of mindset that James is speaking against.

I could say to our graduates today. Congratulations, today is your day, you're off to great places, you're on your way, you get to decide where to go and you're smart and good enough to do the right thing, I believe in you. It's a nice bit of fluffy lip service, but it would be a meaningless statement because first of all I don't have a clue what the future holds, I don't know if things are going to be great for the graduates or if their life might be full of turmoil. For all I know God

forbid one of our graduates could be diagnosed with a terminal illness and be gone in two months. Secondly, I would never state something like that because it would be a denial of our absolute and utter desperation that we have for God to be the one that guides us. Following our own way is a foolish endeavor that will always lead us to places we don't want to be, and in the end it will lead us to hell. We are not wise enough, not strong enough, we don't see things as God sees them, and we are only deceiving ourselves when we think our plans are good apart from God. Don't go where you think you should go, go where God has revealed you should. Humble yourselves before the almighty God and turn to him alone for guidance.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Psalm 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Listen, I'm no dr. but I'll take the words of God over dr. Seuss. We need to acknowledge God in all our ways if we want to walk down straight and good paths. We need God to be our teacher if we want to know the way we should go. Life is too fragile and too short, to waste it living for what we think is best. As James says; life is a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. It's like a morning fog here for a moment and gone by noon. Like a puff of smoke that dissipates in an instant.

Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

We often don't consider the brevity of our life, but we should, because recognizing our limited time helps us to get our priorities straight. Our priorities can get out of line when we think we always have another tomorrow. I'll call that person I need to encourage tomorrow. I'll read my bible more tomorrow. I'll love my family more tomorrow. I'll pray more starting tomorrow. Your life is a mist, and by tomorrow it could be over. There was a supposed custom in ancient Constantinople when an emperor was crowned. They would bring before him marble slabs and he was to choose one that would be his future tombstone. At the pinnacle of his life, the emperor would be made aware that he would not live forever. Today is the day, now is the moment, and how should we live our life? We should live in such a way that our heart is not set on the earthly things as the merchants in our passage showcase, but rather our heart should be set upon God, acknowledging him in all our ways.

Verses 13, 14 & 16 of James paint a picture of arrogant boastful people who were living for themselves without acknowledging God. They make their plans and don't even consider God. But don't we do the same all too often. We make decisions without a thought of God and we end up functioning as practical atheists. It's a major heart issue that reveals who our master is and who we believe is really in control. When we live life, make plans, find jobs, choose universities, and seek spouses all without reference to God, we are living as if God didn't even exist, we are taking the sovereign God down from his throne in our hearts where he ought to be and we are placing ourselves on that throne. This type of life is boastful and arrogant, and evil, it's exactly

how the world lives. The world goes on day after day, pretending like they are in control, pretending like they know what tomorrow will bring, pretending like they have sooo much time to do everything they please. They forget the King, the one who holds time in his hands, they ignore the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end who could end their life in an instant. They live in an illusion of control believing they have the power to manipulate the pieces of their life to gain what they want. Yet the Lord is still on his throne and he is the one who decides what will take place.

***Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.
- Proverbs 19:21***

Let's not play pretend brothers and sisters. We have no control over our lives ultimately, and the sooner we recognize this the better off we will be. We weren't made to be in control and that's okay, does a good parent let their child decide what to eat every day, or where to go or what to do. No, that would be child abuse because the child not being as wise as the parents would make a whole lot of terrible choices and the parents would be terrible parents for allowing their children to do as they please. God is our father, he made us in the beginning to walk with him, to be taught by him, to be led by him and his statutes. He is the one who knows best, therefore he should be the one in control. God is so loving that he doesn't allow his children to do what they want, but he lovingly leads them to what is good for them.

Do you know what Satanists greatest commandment is? It is "do what thou wilt". Do what you want is a satanic creed that is inched its way into all areas of popular culture. These merchants James is addressing don't even realize the demonic nature of their own lifestyle and sadly we often don't recognize it either. When we do what we will rather than what God wills, we begin to go down an evil and dark path that will only open our heart up to Satan's schemes and Satan wishes to kill, steal and destroy everything in our life. But If we are Christ followers we don't live for our will, we live for God's will. Jesus is our beautiful example in this regard. Jesus did all that the heavenly father told him and even in the garden of gethsemane when he asked if the cup of God's wrath could be passed from him, he said nevertheless not my will, but your will be done. Jesus went to the cross, obeying the will of God the father and suffered greatly for it, but he did it knowing that it was the best thing to do because it was God's will.

If Jesus decided to let the cup pass from him, none of us would be here right now and none of us would have eternal life, we'd all be dead in our sin still. Praise the Lord that he went to the cross for us in obedience to the father, teaching us what it means to seek the will of the Lord above our own. So let us cast off this demonic notion that we are in control of our lives and humbly submit ourselves to God's will as we see James encouraging us to do in verse 15.

Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

Instead of boastfully and arrogantly living for ourselves and thinking we will accomplish all we set out to do, we should humbly submit our lives to the Lord and recognize that we will only be able to do things if the Lord wills. If the Lord wills, we will have a nice lunch after the service

today, If the Lord wills you will do well in college, If the Lord wills you will get the job you want. This mentality of Lord willing should be stamped onto our hearts. The truth is you will literally not do a thing if the Lord doesn't allow it.

Nebuchadnezzar's story in the book of Daniel reveals as much. He was the King of Babylon, the great ancient city known for its hanging gardens and its great wealth. Let's take a brief look at a portion of his story.

At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws. - Daniel 4:29-33

Nebuchadnezzar believed that he was something special, that he with his own might and his own power had built Babylon. His heart was boastful, arrogant and prideful, revealing his lack of honor toward God. But God was the one who was really in control and was responsible for all of his success. God made sure that Nebuchadnezzar knew who actually rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he pleases.

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

God does all he pleases, and nothing can stop that. If we do have success, we have God to thank for that, not ourselves. There is no such thing as a self-made man who can boast about his accomplishments. The merchants that James speaks of were like Nebuchadnezzar, thinking of themselves as entrepreneurial geniuses. They thought they were so great in their ability to make profits. They thought they were hot stuff. But who gave them their intellect? Who gave them safe passage on the seas or on land during their travels? Who gave them the very breath of life they needed to even live another second?

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Everything good is from God, all these merchants had was from the hand of God and they should have been giving him praise rather than boasting in themselves. Their boasting shows that their hearts are far from God and their lack of reference to God in their planning reveals the same.

What about us? Have we forgotten God? Have we been planning our life with little or no thoughts of our wonderful creator? This reveals in us a lack of love for God and when you lack love for God you don't care for his will as much as your own. You don't live with a Lord willing mindset, but rather with a my will be done mindset. Of course, we can't fix a lack of love ourselves. Love comes from God and if you want to care more for God's will then take a moment with me to remember the gospel of God's great love for us. Through the Gospel, by the power of the Spirit, God can melt our hard hearts and connect us to his will.

Jesus, God in the flesh sent by the will of the heavenly father, came to die in our place for our sins. He took the wrath of God upon himself in order to free us from the bondage of sin and to give us eternal life. He rose again three days later, conquering death and proving to be God. If anyone believes in the name of Jesus and his death burial and resurrection they will be saved. Jesus died to bring us back to God so that he can be our father and so that we can follow his lead not our own. Eternal life is promised to those who accept Jesus and submit to the sovereign will of God. Do you see how much God loves you, that he desires to rescue you from your own arrogant and proud ways? You were not created to be in control, but instead to be controlled by the love of God. Give up the dreadful and dreary ways of the world who have forgotten God. Follow after God and humbly bow the knee before him, otherwise in the future your knee will be forced to bow before him.

If you have not accepted Jesus as your Lord and savior, you are not promised tomorrow. Today is the day you are here because the sovereign hand of God brought you here. Don't harden your heart, but instead turn from your sin and believe in Jesus. When you do this, you will find freedom in laying down your own will and find rest in following God's will. Following God's will doesn't mean an easy life and that you won't suffer, but it does mean God will be with you always and one day when you pass away he will take you home forever.

At this point I want to ask the band to come back on stage as well as any highschool graduates I have some gifts for you and I'd also like to speak these last few words over you.

While the world attempts to escape the sovereignty of God and become their own rulers. I pray that you all would run to God as sovereign and let him rule over you. I pray that you would Acknowledge God in all your ways and not lean on your own understanding and trust that God has the best path for you even if it's extremely difficult. I pray that you would be humble planners who say in your hearts or even out loud, Lord willing we will do this or that. Lord willing, we will graduate, find good jobs, and have a great family.

James 4:17 says "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

You know the right thing to do now. There are no excuses. If you go off and live your life as the merchants in this passage did, you are sinning and the consequences will crush you. Trust me I know from experience. But by the grace of God and his might, if you submit to his will, you can find true life in Christ. - Let's Pray