“When Life Gives You Lemons…”

Scripture: James 1:1-12; Romans 5:1-8

Biblical Context: James, the half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55), once did not believe in him (John 7:5). After the risen Christ appeared to him (1 Corinthians 15:7), he led the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15). He writes to Jewish believers “scattered among the nations,” for whom following Jesus came at a real cost.

- He calls himself a servant (doulos) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. (v1)
- Was martyred in Jerusalem after refusing to deny his faith in Jesus.
- James begins with suffering, because that is where Christlike living is tested.

I. Count it joy: God is making you complete. (vv2-4)

- Trials come “whenever,” they are “many,” and of every “kind” . (v2)
- Joy is a conclusion of faith, not a feeling. Happiness depends on what happens.
- Trials → tested faith → perseverance → mature and complete. (v3-4)
- The goal of every trial is Christlikeness. (Romans 8:28-29)

II. Ask for wisdom in the trial. (vv5-8)

- Knowledge gathers information, understanding interprets it, wisdom applies it.
- Ask: God “gives generously to all without finding fault.” (v5)
- Believe and don’t doubt: faith is an anchor, not a wave tossed by the wind. (vv6-8)

III. Love God through it: the crown and the cross. (v12; Romans 5)

- The crown of life is promised “to those who love him.” (v12)
- Justified through faith: peace with God, access to God, hope of glory. (Romans 5:1-2)
- Suffering → perseverance → character → hope. (Romans 5:3-4)
- “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

When life gives you lemons (trials), what would James do?

1. Remember whose he is: a servant of Jesus Christ. (v1)
2. Consider it pure joy, and let perseverance finish its work. (vv2-4)
3. Ask for wisdom, and believe. (vv.5-8)
4. Love God through it, looking ahead to the crown of life. (v12) Remember that all our abilities come from the Lord: (18)
5. A final warning to avoid worshipping the gods of your neighbours: (19,20)

Big idea:
God never wastes our pain; He uses every trial to make us complete in Christ.

Questions for individual or small group reflections

OBSERVATION (WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?)

- How does James’ description of himself and of his readers make reading this letter exciting? (v 1)
- What three words in verse 2 describe the trials we face?
- What reasons does James give for viewing suffering in this way? (v 3-4)
- What should we do if we struggle to have the “wisdom” to look at our trials in this way? How will God respond? (v 5)

What verse or phrase catches your attention the most?

INTERPRETATION (WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

- How is this view different from how we tend to view suffering?
- How does “double-minded” (v 8) help us understand what James means by “doubt” in verse 6?
- Read Romans 5:1-8. What do we enjoy as a result of being justified through faith (v 1-2)? How do Paul’s words reinforce and add to James’ message?

APPLICATION (WHAT DO I DO ABOUT IT?)

- How should knowing what Christians will receive in the future (v 12) affect our view of suffering now? What stops us from viewing our lives like this?
- Is there a trial in your life that you have not been considering as “pure joy”? What might God be doing in you through that hardship?
- Where do you need God’s wisdom this week?

Goal for this week: Memorize James 1:12 (NIV)

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

October 18, 2026 | What Would James Do? (Wk 1) Pastor Jeremiah Vijey, The Olive Branch