

Title: The Washing Machine of Life  
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James 1:5-8

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Opening story:

- Young pastor of a small congregation, family ran out of money
- In the Washing Machine: Agitated, embarrassed, ashamed
- Asking God what to do
- God brought a gracious and generous counselor,
- My field of vision was closing, he helped me open it.
- By the end, the church Confirmed that I had done the best I could and adjusted by salary.  
– A huge weight was lifted off
- God made a way

*2020 ought to be called the Year of the Washing Machine.*

James says an amazing thing. He tells when we are in the Washing Machine of life and can't figure which way is up, then **we can trust in God's gracious and generous character. We can go straight to God with our need for wisdom, and that God not only hears but will give generously, without finding fault.**

What comes to your mind when you hear the word, "Wisdom"? In the biblical tradition, Wisdom includes all the information, evidence, and facts that are being collected as well as voice of experience that helps us make sense of it all.

*My working definition of wisdom: An understanding of reality that enables me to respond in the most loving way possible.*

When I say "an understanding of reality," I mean:

- To see things the way they really are.
- To see God as God truly is.
- To see myself as I truly am.

When I say, "able to respond in the most loving way possible," I mean taking the next right step that will:

- Reflect God's care for me, others, and the world.
- See God's will "done on earth as it is in heaven."

When we find ourselves in the Washing Machine of Trials, it is easy to be flooded with negative emotions. Things we face:

- Guilt. If only... I should know better...
- Confusion. Questioning everything – our actions, motives, and capabilities. Wondering if God is punishing me, if God even loves me?
- Fear. Feeling out of control, that something we hold dear might be lost. We are tempted to withdraw in order to protect what we have.
- Anger. that cannot be sustained and is replaced with despair or hopelessness. Which is why counselors often regard depression as the other side of anger.

When we are in the Washing Machine, what can we rely upon?

James' answer: God's gracious character.

**God is the One who gives generously to all without reproach.**

God is GIVING

James again harkens back to the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says: "Ask and it WILL be given to you." It is God's nature to be pouring life into creation, and pouring out all we needed to live life well.

God gives TO ALL.

What radical, extravagant claim James makes! What if "all" means all!? How could this be an invitation to us to encourage others – regardless of whether they identify as Christian or not, to take a chance on God's generous character?

God gives to all GENEROUSLY

No hint of reluctance, or of having to earn it. Wisdom is available by bucketful.

God gives to all generously WITHOUT FINDING FAULT.

The very moment we need it most is when we are most likely to beat ourselves up about it. God's doesn't do that! God is so pleased when we ask.

Because of the reliability of God's character, we can ask, as James says, "in faith... not doubting... not as double-minded person." When I have heard sermons on this text, there often seems to be more emphasis placed on our character, our faith, and our single-mindedness than on God's extravagantly generous character. So for today let's just summarize James this way: "Let the one who asks do so with sincerity, as one who really does want God's wisdom and wants to live it out." As Thomas Merton said, "With God a little sincerity goes a long way." And we can even be insincere about our struggles in doubt as the man who said to Jesus, "I believe! Help my unbelief!"

**Call: Immerse yourself in wisdom**

Immerse yourself in wisdom. Read James' letter to the dispersed church once a week. Read it in different translations. Listen to it straight through. What are you hearing? List it. Review your list. What is God's character as revealed there?

Conclusion:

What is God saying to you right now?

**Closing Prayer**

**Notes**