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**Come Now, You Rich, Weep and Howl for the Miseries that are  
Coming Upon You**

**James 5:1-3**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just again, we thank you for your grace, we thank you for your goodness and we thank you for your love. And I thank you, Lord, for the gift of your word, I thank you for that part of the service where we can open up your word and see the love that you have for us. Father, I pray your Holy Spirit would guide us, I pray that as we do that very thing this morning that we would have the privilege and the presence of your Spirit and that what we see and what we learn may become of permanent value, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

As you probably know, we are committed to expository preaching, and expository preaching means you go through the Bible verse by verse because it forces you to look at things that you might not want to look at. This is the 33rd message that we are doing in the book of James going verse by verse through that. And you know, today is -- today's Mother's day. We opened up just speaking about the fact that it's Mother's day, we have a wonderful little exposition about the glories of heaven, we had the love chapter that we got to read

and recite this morning, and I've looked at the scripture that I'm supposed to do this morning. Have you looked at the title of the scripture that I have to do this morning? I confess, about a week ago I opened this up and I looked at it and I just said, yikes. God help me. And hopefully and I believe God has, 'cause God is good. So let me just read to you the text that we have this morning. This is James 5, verses 1-6. It says: *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.*

I confess, when I come across a scripture like this, the first thing that I want to do is safely distance myself from it. I mean, these are nasty people that James is speaking of, these are miserable, rotten wretches who richly deserve the misery that is headed their way. *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the*

*miseriaes that are coming upon you.* So I want to say, "Boy, I'm sure glad this has nothing to do with me." Well, I believe that I, and we, should say instead, "Lord, I hope, I hope this has nothing to do with me, but if it does, if it does, I'm asking for the grace to know it and to know it now." You see, whenever you come to a particularly difficult passage like this, you are far, far wiser to open your eyes up as wide as they will go and then to perk up your spiritual ears and ask yourselves: Could this text be speaking to me? As the nuns used to tell me in grammar school: "A word to the wise is sufficient." So the first thing that we want to know about James and our text this morning is that he is not attacking wealth, per se. I mean, after all, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, David, and Solomon, these were all Old Testament figures of immense wealth. And in the New Testament we have Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Lydia, the seller of purple, these were all wealthy New Testament figures, and God blessed all of them. So wealth, wealth itself is not the issue here. Rather for James it is how the wealth is obtained, how it is kept, and how it is used that marks the difference between it being a blessing and a curse.

So the first question we want to ask ourselves here is the obvious response to James' first statement: Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the *miseriaes* that are coming upon you. And our big question, first of all, is how do you define the word "rich."

Well, in a BBC news article entitled: "Where Are You on the Global Pay Scale," it turns out that they figured a way to determine that. Let me just quote. It says:

"First they work out the total wage bill for every country in the world. To do that they get the average salary from each office for national statistics and multiply that amount by the number of earners in each country. In this way they are able to give more weight to countries which have more workers in them. The average salary in China, for instance, has more influence on the world average than the average salary in New Zealand where many fewer people live, and once they have the total wage bill for each country, they add them all together and divide by the total number of earners in the entire world, and that gives you the answer. The world's average salary is \$1,480 a month, which is just less than \$18,000 a year. That's in U.S. dollars."

So if you earned \$18,000 a year in the United States, your salary is average for the entire world. If you earned \$36,000 a year, you earn twice what the world average is, and it would probably put you and me in the category of rich. You see, even in Port Jervis, many of us live at a salary level above what most of the world lives on and way, way, way above what many of the world who live in poverty live on. We just don't think that we are wealthy because we tend

to compare ourselves with ourselves, and that is almost always a mistake. 2 Corinthians 10:12 says: *But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.* You see, because we all tend to relativize our wealth, we just don't think of ourselves as rich. I was reminded of a famous quote that was uttered by Latrell Sprewell, noted authority, NBA basketball star, he said this when he turned down a salary offer of \$21 million for three years. This is what he said. He said, "After all, I've got a family to feed." I said, "Dude, what do you eat?" I mean, this man was measuring himself by himself. He was comparing his NBA salary to other NBA salaries and not to reality. So he actually thought that \$7 million a year to play basketball was a good reason for complaint. Now, we might think well, I drive a 10-year-old car and it's got 120,000 miles on it, my neighbors on my left and on my right, they all drive new cars, but that is comparing ourselves with ourselves. It is far more accurate to compare yourself to someone pulling themselves along on a donkey cart to see where we fit in the grand scheme of the world's economy. So let's just accept this morning the premise that most of us by world standards are in the category that James referred to as rich. What matters here is how the wealth is obtained, how it is kept, and how it is used.

So let's look first at how James reflects on how this wealth is

obtained. This is James 5:4. He says: *Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.* Well, James is clearly indicting wealth obtained fraudulently, and here his primary target is the wealthy farmers who are defrauding the day laborers by holding back their wages. You see, these farmers they were not just threatening the workers' livelihood; they were literally threatening their lives. Most of us are so far removed from this kind of an economic circumstance, something that James is describing here, that it doesn't -- it doesn't really impact us.

You know, when I was in India, the hotel that we were staying at was being remodeled, and I saw day laborers, they were hauling baskets of concrete fragments on their head, and they were running up and down eight flights of stairs barefoot, 95 degree heat, and they were doing it for the equivalent of about \$2 a day, and I remember asking one of the locals, they explained that that was just about enough money for someone to literally feed their family. If their overseers had decided to hold back their wages, these people would have literally gone hungry. This is exactly what James is condemning. Again, James 5:4, he says: *Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by*

*fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.* You see, evidently this was a common practice. James goes on to say in James 5:6: *You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.* See, when you're dealing with people who are so close to the edge economically that all it takes is a little shove to just push them off that edge -- you know, if somebody didn't pay me my wage, I would still be able to feed, clothe, and house myself. But if these people did not get paid, if they didn't get paid, they didn't eat. Not only do they not eat, they couldn't care for themselves. Now, I know for a fact that in a place like I was in India, if you got sick and you had no money, there was no infrastructure there that was going to protect you. If you had no resources, you just died; you just died and nobody blinked. I remember spending two nights in the city of 12 million people, and one thing that I was incredibly struck with is I never once heard the sound of a siren, like an ambulance or any of that kind of thing. It's something that you just take for granted in an American city. I remember I mentioned how strange it was not to hear any emergency vehicles in such a huge city, and the folks looked at me there like I had two heads, because they -- they understood what we don't get at all. They understood that if you have the resources and an emergency happens, somebody can take you to the hospital, you can get that dealt with, you live. But if you

don't, you die. You just die. It really is that simple. And in that context, James is talking about the consequences of denying people those resources that they are due. He's putting fraudulent business practices on the same level as condemning and murdering righteous people, people too powerless to fight back. That's because the people who die of starvation or disease as a result of fraudulent business practices are just as dead as if they'd been murdered.

And now again, I want to look at those passages and breathe a sigh of relief that this couldn't possibly have anything to do with me. Well, let me challenge you. Let me challenge you on this as well. You see, we conservative evangelicals seldom think out of the box when it comes to applying scripture to areas that we are considering to be outside of our cultural boundaries. Let me give you an example. As Protestants, we seldom take the time to carefully consider issues about birth control and social justice or even how we treat Mary, the mother of Jesus, because we all know that Catholics have positions on those and we don't agree with those positions. That's not a position. That's not a position at all. "What's your position on Mary?" "Well, I disagree with the Catholics." "What is your careful prayerfully considered position on birth control?" "Well, Catholics say it's a sin and I don't believe that." That's not a position. That is not a thought out



position at all. That's stating what you don't believe; that's not stating what you do. You see, part of leading a God-pleasing life is leading an examined life, and that means that everything comes under the watchful eye of scripture. Romans 14 tells us in areas where the scripture is not plain that we have an obligation to become fully convinced. Romans 14:5: *Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.* You see, to be fully convinced is to thoroughly examine an issue from all angles to see how God would have you react and respond. That even goes for positions that we might consider to be liberal positions, things that we don't touch 'cause they've got cooties, things that have to do with social justice.

This is the area that James brings us into in our scripture this morning, and it won't do to say, "Oh, that's a liberal position." It won't do to say, "That's the social gospel; that's social justice." When James says in James 5:6 says: *You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you,* he is specifically targeting the consequences of dishonest and fraudulent business practices. Now, on the local level, James is calling on every one of us who hires employees to realize the obligation we have to be fair and open and honest, to offer up a just wage and safe working conditions. I know that's not an easy task because I ran a business for 30 years. I know that. But what James is speaking of also applies not just to business owners, it is also an

obligation that we have as members of the global economy.

Now, just this past week or week and a half or so in Bangladesh, India an unsafe, overcrowded clothing factory collapsed killing over a thousand garment workers, mostly women. I just want you to think for a second. Just imagine what would have happened if that happened here in the United States. 1,000 people crushed or suffocated. One article said this, it said:

The latest disaster, as well as others like it, including a deadly factory fire late last year exposed the flaws in a system where Western retailers pay to have clothes produced abroad at bargain basement prices but have little oversight over the factories where the clothes are made. Activists and protesters around the world have put increasing pressure on retailers to change their business practices in response to the disasters and some have already taken steps to address the situation. Disney told its vendors in March before the deadly factory collapse to stop doing business in Bangladesh, representatives from Wal-Mart, the Gap, and other retailers met last week to come up with a plan to prevent future disasters. Some of those retailers have also put pressure on Bangladesh in the past to improve conditions for the country's workers.

Now, there's a reason why retailers put pressure on Bangladesh. You must know the reason. It's because their customers put pressure on them. You know, someone might think, well, that's way over on the other side of the world, what does that have to do with me? Others may think, well, that's a liberal thing, they go around the world sticking their nose in everybody's business. You know, I look at that and I wonder when it says, "Activists and protesters around the world are putting increasing pressure on retailers to change their business practices in response to these disasters," I wonder why it doesn't say "Christians around the world are putting increasing pressure on retailers to change their business practices in response to these disasters." I mean, after all, we have the word of God right here pointing out to us how much God hates this kind of oppression on the local level. He says: You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you. So I wonder, why aren't we just concerned about it worldwide level? Why is it that activists, progressives, and protesters are the only ones who seem to care about the plight of the exploited worker and not committed Christians? And the problem goes far deeper than just Wal-Mart and clothing outlets. I'm going to hit a little closer to home here. Consider the following article about the Apple iPhone. I see a lot of people are grabbing for their -- it's an article entitled "Apple's New Foxconn Embarrassment." It says this:

As Apple launches its much anticipated new iPhone 5 today, news reports about conditions at the company's manufacturing partner in China, Foxconn Technology, are fueling renewed criticism of the labor practices that go into making Apple's popular products. Yesterday's New York Times had a detailed report about vocational students who were being virtually forced to work at Foxconn plants producing iPhones and their components. At the same time, a journalist at the Shanghai Evening Post went undercover and worked for ten days at a Foxconn factory in Tai Yuan where the iPhone 5 was being manufactured. He wrote about filthy, smelly, cockroach-infested dormitories, numbingly repetitive work, and pressure to put in maximum overtime.

Now, you might think this article appeared in Mother Jones or some other liberal publication. This was an article from Forbes, a conservative business magazine. It went on to say that workers there are paid under \$2 an hour, and they work to produce the iPhone, and the people who produce these phones are sometimes required to work 24 hours straight, they're not allowed to sit down, they're forced to stand. They said one of the innovations that this factory has employed, is they put suicide netting around the outside of the building in order to prevent their employees from killing themselves, because 24 of them have already done that

in the past year. This is how Forbes concludes. He says:

Customers do not like the idea that their products are being produced in abusive sweat shops. Sumofus.org, a group formed this year that has been protesting labor abuses at Apple, issued a press release yesterday. "Back-to-back independent reports confirmed that Apple and its suppliers are still treating workers poorly, and in some cases even worse than before," it said, "as the richest company in the world, with a record-breaking profit margin of at least 44.1 percent, they have the power to pressure Foxconn and force change. Put simply, if Apple demands it, it will happen, and this is what their customers want."

I'm not saying that it's a sin to own an iPhone, understand that, or an iPad or any of those things but what I am saying is that we have an opportunity and an obligation to reexamine where we fit in this global economy and that our influence counts, and I believe God is calling on us to use it. Again, it's not just clothing and electronics. There's a whole host of other items that are now produced in the global economy for which we bear some responsibility. Again, to quote, "Put simply, if Apple demands it, it will happen. This is what their customers want." That's us. That's our responsibility as well. It goes with a whole bunch of other items, free trade coffee, blood or conflict diamonds, those should not be something that only Progressives and Catholics care

about, because retail customers care what their consumers think. Retail companies care what their customers think. And it's really a matter of letting them know what is important to you as a consumer. You know, if humane working conditions and a fair and just wage is not that important to you, then you are perhaps the person James is trying to speak to. Saving money by exploiting workers, whether they are next door or on the other side of the globe is just another way of fraudulently accumulating wealth, and wealth obtained by means of fraud or oppression is wealth that James says will bring you nothing but judgment. And so far as I can tell, and I looked around, the own ones who really seemed to care about worker exploitation are those on the Progressive side, and that by no means excuses us.

Now, the second area that James explores is how the wealth is kept. James 5 says this: *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. You know, there's a vast difference between wisely saving your money and laying up fraudulently gotten treasure in the last days. Proverbs 13:22 says this: A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of a sinner is stored up for*

*the righteous.* James goes on to describe another fate of this wealth, he says: *Your riches have rotted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*

Do you remember how God fed the Jews when they were in the desert? Remember what he did? You all know, he sent them manna. He told them to gather what they needed and not to hoard it. Exodus 16:19 says this: *And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning." Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. See, God made the manna rot.* However, that same manna, if it had been harvested the day before the Sabbath, it had this miraculous ability to last through the following day. Exodus 16:23 says: *Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil that you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.*

You see, the ability to remain rot free came not from the manna, it came from God, and it was tied to the intentions of the gatherers. You know, the greedy, the disobedient, the hoarders, they found this bread of life stinking and full of worms. The obedient found

it as they had always found it, that they had just enough and that it always lasted just long enough. Moses even told Aaron to lay up some manna as a memorial for generations. In Exodus 16:32 it says: *Then Moses said, "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"* So it turns out this manna could last for years or it could rot within hours, depending on the intentions of those who gathered it. And God through James is applying this very same principle to wealth. Listen to what he says. Again, this is verse 2: *Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire.* You know, when the manna went bad, all you really had to contend with was a stinking, worm-filled mess. What James is saying here is that the mess that ill-gotten wealth produces is not just rot, corruption, and corrosion, but a whole body of evidence that will point directly at you and shout "guilty!"

Now, I can think of examples of that, and one particular example comes to mind of wealth terribly gained silently giving testimony against those who gained it, it's the mounds of cash that you often see discovered when narcotics raids are made. One of the most



difficult things for big time drug dealers to deal with is the physical space that they need to house all the cash that they accumulate, and so they wind up making up elaborate ruses to cover their tracks to launder all this money, and when they get caught, the very wealth that they sought winds up convicting them of their guilt. They illustrate the principle that our actions, both for good and for bad, can have permanent consequences, and they show that what we do will at some point testify either for us or against us.

Again, James is not attacking wealth, per se. He is attacking ill-gotten wealth, and he's highlighting the curse that such wealth always brings with it. The men that James is referring to here had been captured by the very wealth that they thought they were capturing. See, they ignored the principle that God lays down in Matthew 6:21 which says: *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* And what they wound up doing is they treasured wealth itself, and wealth treasured by itself gotten by any means whatever, however, well, what that does is it takes their heart and it follows their treasure down to the very pit that they dig for themselves. James 5:5 says: *You have lived on the earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.* Now, cattle being fattened for slaughter would probably think, if they could think "Man, this is great, look at all the

food that I have! Feed my like crazy, don't have to worry about anything!" Without the gospel, this is exactly what the wealthy think as well. They think that because that's what the enemy wants them to think. They want them thinking only eat, drink and be merry. And James here is calling out the fraudulent rich with the imagery of farm animals being cultivated merely as future meat. They're brute animals, not even wise enough to recognize their own impending doom.

You see, for James, what matters about wealth is first how it is obtained, and if it is obtained through fraud and oppression, it will never be blessed, and it will hang like an albatross around the necks of those who obtain it that way. Secondly, he cares about how wealth is kept, and wealth like manna can be used to enrich and sustain life, but if it is abused through disobedience, fraud, and greed, God can and does simply make it rot. He says: *And it will evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire.*

Thirdly, the question is: How do we use wealth? Well, using wealth well, well that brings nothing but blessing, and the proof of that lies in 1 Timothy 6:17. Listen to this. This is instructions to wealthy people. This is what he says: *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to*

*trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. See, the wealthy person 1 Timothy commends is someone who understands what wealth is. He understands it is a tool to do good, to be rich in good works. He is somebody who is willing to share, and he's ready to give, and his wealth will give testimony for rather than against him. Again, Matthew 6:19: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."*

Now, suffice it to say that a study of how we use our treasure is going to require more than just a few passing statements. And a number of years ago, seven years ago actually, I did a six-part series on stewardship, and I'm going to be revisiting that this summer, and one of the best resources -- in fact I have it right here -- one of the best resources I've ever seen on this subject is this little book. We have a couple of these downstairs. It's called *The Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn. We're going to be spending a good deal of time looking at that this summer, but just let me give you a foretaste of what he says about stewardship.

This is what he says: "Stewardship isn't just a subcategory of the Christian life. Stewardship is the Christian life. For what is stewardship but that God has entrusted to us: life, time, talents, money, possessions, family, and his grace. In each case he evaluates how we regard and what we do with what he's entrusted to us."

I started this message off by saying we're coming to this final stretch of James and he's opening up chapter 5 with some very choice things to say about the rich. Let me re-read to you those statements. This is again James 5:1-6. He says: *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.* I could not imagine anyone fitting that description receiving anything other than a just condemnation. Understand what James is doing here. James writes of God's

judgment as a means of encouraging his flock. You see, they have been the victims of fraud and oppression. They are longing to see justice done, and James points out that God's judgment is absolutely inevitable and unavoidable. They just need to be patient. This is what he says in the very next verse, he says: *Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and late rains. See,* understand, James is writing to an abused and oppressed group of people who have been cast out not only by the government, by their own fellow Jews as well. These are people who are poor and oppressed and they needed to know about God's justice. We need to know about his mercy. You see, we serve a God of mercy and grace. Ephesians 2:4-5 says this: *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ -- by grace you have been saved.* You see, a God who is rich in mercy, he once poured out his mercy on a man who fit James' description to a tee. He was a crook, he was a fraud, someone with rotted riches and moth-eaten clothes who used oppression to obtain his wealth. He had lived on the earth in luxury and self-indulgence. He had fattened his heart in the day of slaughter. He had condemned and murdered the righteous person many, many times over, and yet Jesus Christ reached out and turned his life upside down. Luke 19:1-9

says this of Jesus. It says: *He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.*

I want to you stop for a second and just consider the mercy of God here. Consider James' description of the fate that such men deserve. Remember this is what we started out with: *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. But even that description is not enough to stop the mercy of Jesus Christ. In verse 5, it says: And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."* What a stunning act of grace. Verse 6 says: *So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham."*

That's an amazing story about the mercy of God. But you know, as

great as the celebration of God's mercy is, the fact remains, Zacchaeus was a sinner who had sinned greatly. And you know, James in our text this morning, he's insistent on showing his flock what? He's trying to show his flock God's justice. So who's going to weep and howl for the miseries that Zacchaeus' sin had caused? Whose flesh is going to be consumed by the rotting riches and corroded gold that no longer held Zacchaeus captive now that he's repentant and healed? Zacchaeus did just that. We know that his repentance was a genuine gift from God, but it was a gift with a very heavy price tag. You see, salvation removes my penalty from sin but that doesn't mean the penalty simply disappears. God's perfect justice demands a just penalty for all those who defraud and oppress the poor and the helpless, and if Zacchaeus was no longer to bear that penalty, it was only because someone was going to bear it for him. It was the one who said: *"Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, I must stay at your house today."*

You see, perfect justice was poured out but not on the head of Zacchaeus. Instead it fell on the head of the one who bore his sins in his body. The one of whom 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* Jesus Christ could welcome salvation to Zacchaeus' household because he had bought and paid for the price of his wickedness with his own blood on the cross,

and he's done the same for all those who place their trust in him.

You see, all the judgment that James speaks of, well, they can only fall in two places: It can fall on you, or it can fall on Christ. And you can spend all of eternity weeping and howling for the miseries your own sin is going to bring you or you can give your sin burden to Jesus. Just like with Zacchaeus, Jesus longs to come into your house so that he, too, can see the fruit of repentance in your life, and if God is calling to you this morning, if he's speaking to you and he's telling you I want to come into your house, I want to give you this gift of repentance, I don't want you howling for the miseries of sin for the rest of eternity, then speak to me, speak to one of the elders, speak to one of the deacons, speak to someone, let's get this settled right here and now. And if you know that he has called you already, well then, let's praise him for his excellent mercy. Let's pray.

Father God, I do praise you and thank you for the incredible mercy that you show, and I understand the need for James to show the justice of God to his oppressed flock, but I am just so taken with the mercy of God that cuts right through the justice and pays the price of that justice so that Zacchaeus can be born again. And Lord, we just thank you that's available to any one of us. I just pray for your grace, for your peace, for your power, for your



wisdom, for anyone who is seeking it. And for those of us who have it, we just praise you and thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen.