



## **Day 8 Contagious Love** **Tuesday, March 24, 2020**

**Focal Text:** *<sup>13</sup> Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money."<sup>14</sup> Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that."* - James 4: 13-15

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**ME:** Today or tomorrow, we will go to Disneyworld and spend a week there having fun and enjoying family time over spring break!

**WORLD:** Come now ... you do not even know ...

We've all heard the phrase, *"If you had told me last week that (fill in the blank), I would never have believed you. Yet, here we are."* Many of us have even uttered it. It sure would apply today. In our house, we kept our fingers crossed and our eyes glued to the news updates hoping that our vacation plans would not be compromised. Alas, when Disney announced the closing of all of their major theme parks, we were very disappointed. But, even after that ... if you had told me last week that we'd be socially distancing in the extreme in an effort to combat a global health crisis, I would never have believed you.

Yet, here we are.

This passage is from the book of James and he gives us the punchline right out of the gate. In verse 2, he encourages us to find the joy in trials because the testing of our faith is what causes its roots to sink deep. Perseverance is what James calls it. He later goes on to point out that "*Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*"

We are most certainly in a period of trial. It may even seem like we have no choice but to persevere. But, there are different ways to respond in trials. The rest of James' letter is filled with ideas about how to stay focused on God's unwavering love for us. "To dos" are juxtaposed with "don't dos", but the idea is to be immersed in heavenly wisdom and God's ways - and not on our earthly ways of thinking and doing. Be steadfast. Be kind. Be consistent. Put your money where your mouth is. Be patient. These are hard things to do under normal circumstances. But, we are struggling right now. We are isolated. We are confused. We are frightened. Heavenly wisdom is much harder to come by in times like these.

While we've been forced to sacrifice many things, we've also been given time we would not otherwise have. Let's make every effort to use it with heavenly wisdom. Lean into the patience. Spend time in earnest prayer. Dig to the bottom of your purse, un wrinkle your Advent word - and meditate on it. Call a friend, family member, or congregation member. Be with your family in ways that your "normal" schedule would not otherwise allow. "Together" might need to look a little different right now. But, we'll figure it out. For starters, James says, "*come near God and he will come near you.*" Being near - to God and (though metaphorically) to one another - can bring a sense of peace to the fact that we really don't know what tomorrow will bring.

- *Eric Lybeck-Brown*