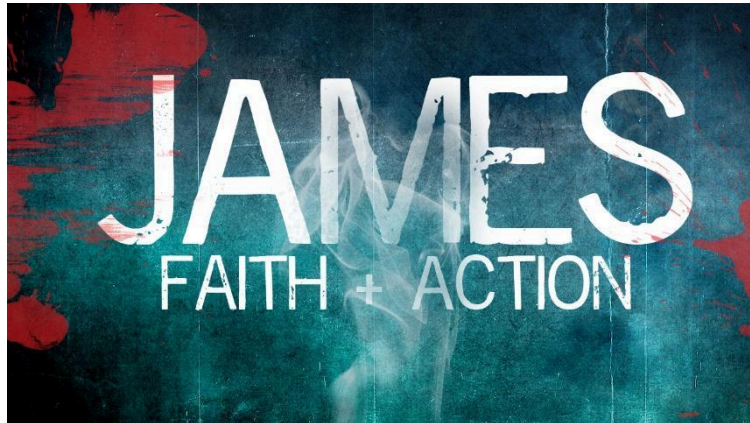


ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING



10.30 am 27th July 2025

Bridget Gurney leading and Pauline Mbukwa preaching

Theme: Be a Peacemaker, choose Heavenly Wisdom

Prayer Time

Call to Worship

Fill this place Lord with your glory. Reign in sovereign grace and power.

Fill this place Lord with your glory'

We exalt you, we adore you, thankful hearts we bring. You are the Christ, the King of Glory.

Fill this place Lord with your glory.

BPW 559 Love Divine all love excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us your humble dwelling,
all your faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, you are all compassion,
boundless love that makes us whole;
visit us with your salvation,
enter every trembling soul.

Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all your grace receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more your temples leave.
You we would be always blessing,
serve you as your hosts above,
pray, and praise you without ceasing,

glory in your perfect love.

Finish then your new creation:
pure and sinless let us be;
let us see your great salvation,
perfect in eternity:
changed from glory into glory
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before you,
lost in wonder, love and praise!

CHARLES WESLEY (1707-88) / CCL Licence Number: 1763

Family Time

Song BPW 356 One more step along the road I go

During the singing of this hymn our financial gifts will be taken

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go,
from the old things to the new
keep me travelling along with you:

And it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn,
all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me:

As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go
you'll be telling me the way, I know:

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough;
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you:

You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me;
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you.

SYDNEY CARTER (b. 1915) / Stainer & Bell Ltd. / CCL Licence Number: 1763

Young people leave for their groups

Prayer

1st Bible Reading Romans 12 v16-18

2nd Bible Reading James 3 v3-18, 4 v1-3

MP 1350 Speak O Lord

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your holy Word
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
All Your purposes for Your glory

Teach us, Lord, full obedience
Holy reverence, true humility
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority
Words of pow'r that can never fail
Let their truth prevail over unbelief

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity
And by grace, we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith, we'll walk as You walk with us
Speak, O Lord, 'til Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory
Keith Getty, Stuart Townend

Sermon

Being peacemakers and being led by heavenly wisdom

Introduction:

We continue with a series on becoming like Jesus. Last week, Jill covered the theme: *Come close to God, and He will come close to you*. Today, my message is about *being peacemakers and being led by heavenly wisdom*.

What causes quarrels among people?

Quarrels are expected. Quarrels can happen at any place: at home, at school, in the workplace, and of course in church. We cannot run away from quarrels; they are part of life. Who has never quarrelled before in their entire life? Quarrels even occur among people of

all ages, from young to old. Sometimes I do quarrel with my husband. But what causes quarrels among us? James highlights three main things in the passage we have read.

1. **Selfish desires and Passions.** James 4:1 says: You desire and do not, so you kill. This reminds me of some of the horrible stories I have heard this week of how some young men killed five people because they wanted to steal money for as little as 1 pound. These people care little about the impact it has caused on the family members. Can you imagine Someone's spouse, children, brother, and breadwinner is gone just like that because of evil, selfish desires?
2. **Coveting and Jealousy:** James 4:2 You covet and do not get what you want, so you fight and quarrel. To Covet is to have a strong, often selfish and ungodly desire for something that belongs to another person or is not rightfully yours. David's actions towards Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, involved covetousness. He desired her, which led to adultery and ultimately, the murder of her husband, Uriah. (2 Samuel 11:1-13)
3. **Prayerless:** James 4: 2-3. James begins by writing, " You do not have because you do not ask. What he means here is that we do not ask God what we want; rather, God desires that we develop a relationship with Him, where we can ask for anything. He even encourages us to make our requests known to Him (Phil 4:6). When we develop an intimate relationship with God, He knows our needs.
4. **Unanswered prayers because of wrong motives:** James also adds an issue that when you ask, you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. God does not answer prayers with bad motives. Sometimes we have made such prayers, 'Bless me with property,' so that everyone should know I am the best. We often ask God for things for our pleasure, rather than for God's glory or to benefit others. Such prayers are not answered because they are self-centred. Jesus taught us how we should pray (Matthew 6:9-14)

Sometimes, God will say yes, sometimes no, and sometimes the response may be 'wait.' In our situation with our second child, we had to wait for three years. Some marriages have gone into fights over unanswered prayers, especially on the issue of children, with one partner blaming the other for not bearing children.

How then should we handle fights and conflicts? Seek the kingdom of God, and all things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:33). As children of God, we must pursue peace consistently. Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." We should ask God for wisdom on how to respond to conflicts, which brings me to the two kinds of wisdom James discusses that help us be peacemakers when we face fights and quarrels.

Why is James emphasizing wisdom? Because wisdom helps us to respond to life's challenges, including the quarrels and fights with faith and maturity, and helps us to live according to God's will. James talks about two kinds of wisdom, and the question is, which of those two —earthly wisdom or heavenly wisdom —is going to characterize us individually, and which is going to characterise our church?

James wants to emphasize that wisdom is not mere head knowledge. Real wisdom and understanding will show in our lives, by our good conduct. So, he says, whoever has wisdom, let him show by good conduct.

1. Earthly wisdom James 3:14-16

This wisdom does not descend from above but is earthly, sensual, demonic. It has its origin in the earth, the world system, its goals, its prosperity, its power, its methods; that's what earthly means. It is unspiritual, natural, and sense-oriented. It is the kind of wisdom that tells us to fight back, retaliating evil with evil; it is the type that does not rely on God's power but on worldly weapons. It is demonic, driven by an agenda to steal, kill, and destroy.

James says Do not boast and lie against the truth: Anyone who shows bitter envy and self-seeking should not deceive anyone, especially themselves, about how wise they are. At the core of earthly wisdom is self-worship. You desire people to think highly of you to boost your ego and fuel your ambition. James mentions bitter envy or jealousy. When you hear someone else being honoured or receiving a promotion, you may feel filled with resentment, which may lead to conflict.

James warns that *'If that's what characterizes you, do not be arrogant and deny the truth,'* because that's not what a converted person looks like. Worldly wisdom is motivated then and characterized by selfish ambition, whatever advances self-interest, whatever elevates the person up to the level of worship, being worshipped, adored, honoured. The result of earthly wisdom is fruitless; it leads to disorder, confusion, and fights, which often end up hurting someone's feelings or, in extreme cases, result in loss of life.

2. Heavenly wisdom James 4:17-18

This is the wisdom that is from above: it is first pure, peaceful, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy. This is the wisdom that we all need, both as individuals and as a church, to resolve quarrels and conflicts. This is the wisdom that helps us to be dependent on God's divine authority to be patient when prayers are not yet answered. This is the wisdom that also enables us to be content with what we have, without comparing ourselves to others. This wisdom is first pure: The reference is not to sexual purity but to the absence of any sinful attitude or motive. This wisdom is then peaceable: This wisdom is gentle: He knows how to forgive when strict justice gives him a perfect right to condemn. This wisdom is willing to yield: "Not stubborn because true wisdom is not rigid but is willing to listen and skilled in knowing when wisely to yield. This wisdom is full of mercy: It does not judge others strictly based on the law but will extend a generous hand full of mercy. This wisdom knows that the same measure of mercy we grant to others is the same measure God will use with us. This wisdom can be seen by the fruit it produces. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace: This fruit is like a seed that will bear fruit as it is planted by those who make peace. You gain this wisdom through the help of the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of God that gives us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Having these qualities will help us respond to quarrels and fights with peace that surpasses all human understanding (Phil. 4:7)

Conclusion

We have looked at the causes of quarrels, including selfish desires and passions, coveting, jealousy, and unanswered prayers. These factors often lead to conflicts and fighting. We

have also looked at two types of wisdom: heavenly and earthly wisdom. While earthly wisdom often leads to confusion and disorder, and fights, heavenly wisdom, on the other hand, yields good fruits, the fruit of righteousness, planted in those who seek peace. We all need divine heavenly wisdom to become more like Jesus and to live at peace with all people. We can ask God for this heavenly wisdom.

Song MP 437 Lord, make me an instrument

Lord, make me an instrument,
an instrument of worship;
I lift up my hands in Thy name.
Lord, make me an instrument,
an instrument of worship;
I lift up my hands in Thy name.

I'll sing You a love song,
a love song of worship;
I lift up my hands in Thy name.
I'll sing You a love song,
a love song of worship;
I lift up my hands in Thy name.

Lord, make us a symphony,
a symphony of worship;
we lift up our hands in Thy name.
Lord, make us a symphony,
a symphony of worship;
we lift up our hands in Thy name.

Robert Hicknell

Prayers of Intercession

Heavenly Father,

We come before You with heavy hearts as we witness suffering, violence, and uncertainty across the world. You are the God of peace, justice, and provision, and so we lift up to You the brokenness we see.

- For Gaza and Israel— Lord, we cry out for the people caught in the crossfire of war. For the innocent, the displaced, the grieving, and the fearful—please bring comfort. Soften hardened hearts, protect the weak, and raise up peacemakers on all sides.

Lord Jesus, may your peace, justice and righteousness be filled in these countries. Amen.

- For Ukraine and Russia— Lord, we ask You to bring an end to violence and restore dignity where it has been torn apart.

Lord Jesus, please grant wisdom to leaders involved in peace talks. Heal the wounded, shelter the displaced, and strengthen those working tirelessly to protect life and rebuild hope. Amen.

- For religious conflicts in Southern Syria—Recent fighting between the religious groups in southern Syria has led to the deaths of hundreds of people and forced tens of thousands to leave their homes. The conflict has also included airstrikes by Israel.

Father, in this place of religious conflicts and deep division, we pray for reconciliation. Protect the innocent from further harm and bring relief to those fleeing from conflict.

Lord Jesus, May Your light shine in this darkness and guide hearts toward peace, healing, and unity. Amen.

- For the global economy and those affected by recession— Lord, for families struggling with rising costs, for workers facing job loss or financial burden, and for small businesses trying to survive—we ask for Your provision. Guide governments and institutions to act with justice, compassion, and responsibility. Help us to share generously and support one another in these uncertain times.

Father, though the world is shaking, we hold on to the truth that You are still sovereign. Strengthen our faith, renew our hope, and teach us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You.

- For Abbey Baptist Church—

Heavenly Father, we lift up all those who are sick in our Abbey Baptist Church family. Please bring Your healing touch to their bodies, minds, and spirits. Restore them to full health and surround them with Your peace and comfort.

Lord, we also pray for those seeking employment. Open doors and provide suitable job opportunities that match their skills and needs. Guide them and bless their efforts with success.

We especially pray for our brothers and sisters from Iran in our church community who are waiting for their settlement visas. Lord, please grant them favour quickly so they may settle and build their lives in peace and security.

Heavenly Father, we pray also for the outreach of Abbey Baptist Church. Help us to share Your love in our community and draw more hearts to You.

Lord, please strengthen our faith. Deepen our walk with You and help us grow in love, wisdom, and service.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Song MP 1072 In Christ alone

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light, my strength, my song
This cornerstone, this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My comforter, my all in all
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness

Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground, His body lay
Light of the world, by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave, He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
'Til He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Keith Getty, Stuart Townend.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen

Notices for the week:

Tuesday 29 th	Zoltan, Marta and Patric move into the manse
Wednesday 30 th	10.30 Renew Wellbeing
Thursday 31 st	10.30 Toddlers
Friday 1 st August	10.30 Prayer Meeting 5.00 Table Tennis Club 7.00 Iranians Meal and Bible Study

Next Sunday 3 rd August	10.30	Worship with Communion Looking at the Book of James 7 James 4:11 - 17 Who's in control - us or God. Do we control others?
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