**Sermon 10/20/19**

**James 4:1-17, 5:7-11**

The Americans and British had a long, awkward relationship

          in the century following the American Revolution.

Back in 1859, there was a boundary between the American land

          in present-day Washington state and the British territory to the north.

The problem was nobody knew where the boundary actually was.

The San Juan islands sat there and both sides claimed to own them.

This went on for years with no problems, until the pig came along.

At some point, the British-owned Hudson Bay company

          set up operations on the islands and turned it into a sheep ranch.

Then, in 1859, about 25 American settlers arrived on what they assumed

          to be their land.

They were no doubt surprised at the large number of sheep already there.

But they ignored the sheep and happily settled into their new home.

On June 15, 1859, one of the Americans, Lyman Cutlar,

          noticed a pig rooting through his garden and shot it.

The pig was owned by Irishman Charles Griffin, a Hudson Bay employee

          who owned several pigs and was raising them free range-style,

          by letting them run around on other people's property.

Cutlar offered Griffin $10 to replace his pig.

Griffin demanded $100.

Cutlar defended himself by claiming the pig

          shouldn't have been on his land eating his potatoes.

Griffin supposedly replied with:

          “It's up to you to keep your potatoes out of my pig.”

British authorities tried to arrest Cutlar, who called on American military aid.

Sixty-six American soldiers were dispatched.

But the British, fearing they would lose control of the islands,

          sent along a couple of warships to counter the Americans.

By the 10th of August, 461 Americans and 14 cannons, were being faced down

          by five British warships carrying 2,140 men.

The British were ordered to storm the islands and remove

          the occupying American forces, which would have triggered an all-out war.

Amazingly, both the British and American commanding officers

             ignored their orders

They gave their respective soldiers strict orders to only fire if fired upon.

Sanity had sort of prevailed.

Who won this unique Pig War?

No one really, though the pig totally lost.

By September, everyone was bored with the whole episode

          and agreed on a joint military occupation of the island.

For the next 12 years, token military forces of about 100 men

          on each side lived in harmony, regularly visiting each other.

Would America and Britain actually have gone to war over a pig?

Think about it. Do arguments and quarrels only heat up for good reasons?

We humans have been fighting and quarreling from the beginning of time.

James was well aware of the damage disagreements can cause.

He wrote this letter in an effort to show the people a better way

           to solve their disagreements.

God has a better plan for his people.

What causes fights and quarrels among you?

Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

You desire but do not have, so you kill.

You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.

Whatever quarrel we may find ourselves in, there is a better way of solving

          our disagreements than fighting it out and hurting one another.

God gives us grace and lifts up those who are humble.

Every situation can be improved when we are humble before God,

          and share his grace with one another.

Anger, frustration, and harsh words, only add fuel to the fire.

Forgiveness and patience can make all the difference.

It is good to remember our opinions are almost certainly

          not as 100% right as we think they are.

God forgives us over and over.

We don't deserve to have God love us, but He loves us anyway.

We didn't deserve to have Jesus come to us, but He did.

How different life can be when we share his forgiveness and love

          instead of arguing and quarreling amongst ourselves.

Larry Davies, taught a teenage Sunday School class at his church.

One Sunday morning he asked his class:      "Does God answer prayers?"

The class erupted with answers such as:

          “Of course.”

          “Yes.”

          “Always.”

“Well then," he said "why don't we pray more frequently?”

There was a long uncomfortable silence in the room.

But slowly the students began to open up.

“I don't know how to pray.”

“I don't know what to say.”

Those are common fears for many of us.

It is common for many of us to feel we don't know how to pray or what to say.

The disciples felt the same way, so they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

James understood, so he gave us an example of how we can pray.

You do not have because you do not ask God.

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives,

               that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

When we ask for something "in Jesus' name",

             we are asking God for something we believe He would want to do.

Praying in "Jesus name" is asking for what we believe

            Jesus would want us to ask for.

"To become more effective in our praying, it is helpful to remember:

     It is not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are;

     nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they may be;

     nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they are;

     nor the music of our prayers, how sweet our voice may be;

     nor the method of our prayers, how orderly they may be;

     nor even the theology of our prayers, how good the doctrine may be;

It is the fervency of our prayers, the constant faithfulness in prayer

which wins the day and unleashes the power of God."

It is the trusting in God, believing he listens, and answers.

It is building a relationship with God, a relationship which changes us,

         and how we live, and changes our relationship with each other.

We may ask will our prayers change God's mind?

But prayer isn't about changing God's mind.

Prayer is about changing our minds, so our will lines up with His will.

James reminded his readers, and also all of us:

          "Come near to God and he will come near to you.

          Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

Prayer is the most powerful way to come close to God.

It is the strongest way to avoid conflicts and arguments with each other.

It is the most efficient way to discover God loves us; God is with us.

An elderly Scotch woman lived all alone.

One day a friend asked her, "What do you do during the day?"

"Well," she answered, "I get my hymnbook and sing.

     Then I get the Bible and let the Lord speak to me.

     Then I tell God everything which is on my mind.

     When I get tired of reading, and cannot sing anymore,

     and have listened to God,

     and have shared my thoughts and questions with him,

     Well, then I just sit still and let the Lord love me."

Praying is not so much about asking God for things,

          but letting God be God in our lives.

AMEN