**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 5-22-2022  
Don’t Be Double-Minded**

Playing sports a good bit growing up, one thing that I became acquainted with was superstitions. While I did have different routines to warm up before games or things that I did between pitches when I was batting, I do not think of myself as a superstitious person.

But sometimes athletes can become quite superstitious. For example, I know of a professional baseball player that used to only eat chicken before each ball game. He must have had a good game or several good games after having chicken for dinner and for him it became something that he did hoping for good luck.

I also recently learned that an NBA player used to wear his college shorts underneath his uniform for good luck.

In fact, I found a long list of common superstitions for different sports. You may have heard of some of them.

In baseball, it is common to step over the baseline, because it is often viewed as bad luck to step on the line. It is also considered bad luck to speak of a no-hitter or a perfect game while it is going on. You may jinx them.

In football, it is often viewed as bad luck to switch numbers when you are traded to a new team.

In bowling, in you are on a winning streak, it is seen as good luck to continue wearing the same clothes.

In rodeo, it is considered good luck to always put your right foot in the stirrup first.

Why do people do these things? They seem silly talking about them now, but I believe they are done because people are convinced that doing these things will help them succeed. They will give them good luck by doing them or avoid bad luck by not doing them.

And superstitious behaviors are certainly not limited to athletes. It is seen by many as bad luck to walk under a ladder or to have a black cat or 7 years bad luck when you have a broken mirror.

Maybe you’ve heard or used the phrase “knock on wood.” It is also a superstitious saying. The saying of that phrase is good to try to prevent bad luck from happening. They may not admit it as a superstition of course.

And there are people that believe that if you find a penny, all day long you will have good luck. Or be careful, because it is Friday the ……….13th.

There are a lot of superstitions out there. In fact 1 Timothy 4:7 states, “ 7 Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.

The Bible is clear that superstition is not what the Lord’s people are called to. One’s success as an athlete or as a person is not based on these things.

**Superstitious behavior actually reveals a form of double-mindedness. It reveals a partial trust in something. Like if I do this, I will have good luck and if I do not do this, I will have bad luck.**

Today, as we continue James’ powerful letter to the early church, James addresses this issue of double-mindedness and how Christians are called to avoid it.

We find this in James 1:5-8

**5If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.**

So what is James getting at here? He certainly thinks that it is very possible for Christians to also become double-minded, even with God.

For even Christians to view God has fickle and not always reliable.

James begins this by speaking about wisdom. He is saying that if anyone asks God for wisdom, God will generously give wisdom to them without finding fault. That’s just God’s nature. He is generous. He is an extravagant giver.

And friends, this is good news. Wisdom is so important. We all need wisdom. We all need understanding. This world can be confusing, right?

But our Triune God is the source of all wisdom. In fact, the Bible reveals to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of wisdom.

And God is a God who desires to give wisdom to people. You may remember, the Lord asked King Solomon what he would like from Him and Solomon asked for wisdom.

And God was pleased with this request. He did not ask for long life or for riches or for the death of his enemies. He asked for wisdom and God was delighted to pour wisdom into him.

The Book of James is often considered very similar to the Old Testament Book of Proverbs. It is very focused on the importance of wise living.

But James goes on to warn his readers that when they ask for wisdom they should believe and not doubt that God will give them wisdom.

When someone doubts in this way, James says that they are acting like waves on the sea, which are tossed here and there by the wind. They are unstable.

James says that these people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. He describes them as being double-minded.

Passages like this, friends, remind us that in the early church it appears that there were some believers that had a tendency to view God a little bit like that famous saying, “He loves me. He loves me not.”

You may be familiar with that and might recall the visual of someone plucking off flower petals and repeating those lines. “He loves me. He loves me not” until they see what one it lands on with the last petal.

Friends, James wants to make it very clear to his readers that they should not see God in that way. From this letter, it is very clear that there are some things that God wants His people to be completely convinced of when it comes to their understanding of God.

Certainly, one of those things is that God desires to give His wisdom to everyone that asks. He is reliable and trustworthy.

But I do not think that James is exclusively speaking of wisdom in this passage. Instead, he is teaching people to not be double-minded when it comes to their relationship with God.

God is not fickle like a good luck charm. God is constantly trustworthy and reliable. God is always faithful and true. God is perfectly good and full of mercy.

God is for them and not against them. God loves them and wants the best for them.

As so, as Christians we can come to God in prayer with confidence, knowing that if we ask anything according to His will, He will give it to us.

And His will is clear on many things. He is the source of all wisdom. He is eager to forgive. He desires to lavish us with His love, His peace, His joy and every spiritual blessing. He desires to help us grow.

**So what is the big takeaway from this passage for us today? It is to remember that God is faithful and trustworthy and we are called to come before Him with confidence as we seek His spiritual help.**

We say sometimes as a church, “God is good, all the time and all the time, God is good.” --- God wants us to believe it. He does not want us to be double-minded. He wants us to know that He always loves us and He always wants what is best for us.

God is gracious. God is forgiving. Jesus’ life reveals all of this so clearly.

We can trust in Him. We are His children.

So let us not be double-minded. Let us not view God in a superstitious way.

He is faithful to His promises. He doesn’t change like shifting shadows. He is reliable.

He will give us wisdom when we ask. We can bank on it.

He will forgive us our sins when we ask Him to forgive us through Jesus and what He did. That’s a promise. **Many people say “I don’t know if God can forgive me for this or for that.” That’s double-mindedness**. He is a merciful and forgiving God. Jesus’ sacrifice was enough.

He will fill us with His love, His peace, His joy – when we ask. That’s a sure thing.

He will comfort us and encourage us in difficult times. So let us go to Him knowing that He is faithful.

He cares. He is a God of love.

If God is for us, who can be against us.

Let us pray…

<https://www.infoplease.com/sports-superstitions#:~:text=Some%20sports%20superstitions%20are%20stranger,chews%20licorice%20between%20every%20inning>.

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The Letter of James commentary – Douglas J. Moo

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