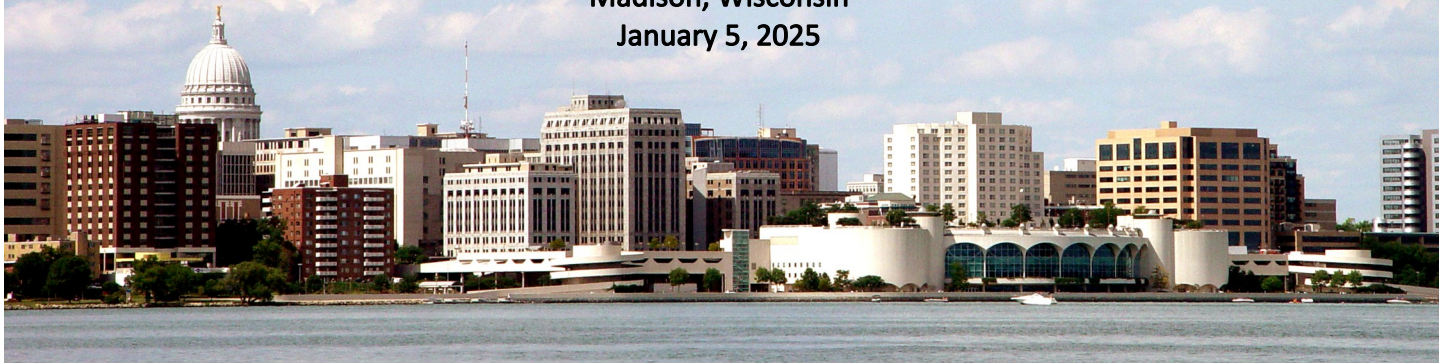


Song & Scripture Service

The Book of James

Baxter T. Exum (#1767)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
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Good morning and welcome to the Four Lakes congregation! If you are visiting with us today, we are happy to have you with us, and we'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card – either online or on a card from the pew in front of you. And we also invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns in that way.

On the fifth Sunday of each month, we try to have a song and scripture service, a time to give a bit more time than usual to singing and to reading publicly from the word of God. Today is not a fifth Sunday, but last week was. Last week, though, we were wrapping up our series of lessons on How We Got the Bible, so we are pretending that today is a 5th Sunday. And our goal today will be to read through the book of James in its entirety and to sing a song or two after each chapter, something to help focus our thoughts on what we've just read. It only takes about 16 minutes to read through the book of James, so that gives us some time to sing a few extra songs today. But as we look at James this morning, and in light of our recent study concerning how we got the Bible, I would just invite us to imagine a messenger showing up and reading that book to us for the very first time. For most people, the books of the Bible were first heard in assembly like this, not read at home. I've asked our readers today to take their time. We're not in a rush. But let's just pay special attention to God's word this morning.

Before we get to our reading of James, though, we want to make sure that we preach the good news this morning, as we do every Lord's Day morning. The good news is that Jesus came to this earth and died for our sins, he was buried later that day, and he was raised up on the third day (the first day of the week). And that's why we come together on the first day of the week, to remember and to celebrate and to proclaim what he has done for us. We obey the good news by turning to God in faith, by turning away from sin, by publicly proclaiming our faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Jesus in baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. And, as usual, we do have several examples to share this week, starting with an update from Dustin Perkins, who is the youth minister at the Lord's church down in Savannah, Tennessee. Dustin posted on New Year's Eve and says, "What a cool way to end 2024!!! Today I had the opportunity to study with 2 young men and baptized them into Christ. The gospel is still the best news out there and our God is so awesome!!! So proud of you Nate and Kevin!!!" I love how we have a group gathered right up there around the baptistery. And I'm including another picture here, looking back toward the auditorium, because this congregation grew and grew and grew through the years, until they actually purchased the old Walmart building back in the early 2000's. They completely gutted it and converted

into classrooms and an auditorium that seats around 750 people. I have heard great things about this group through the years, and it's good to have some good news from Tennessee this week.

This next one comes to us from Trent Wheeler, a friend who recently moved to Panama to serve the Lord. His friend posted from down there and says, "God has done his work again!!! Welcome to the list of those saved Dioselina!!!! Praise the Lord!!!!" So good to see it!

This next one comes to us from Alfred Beyan, who says, "To God be the glory!! Kebeh KoiKoi gave her life to Christ through baptism yesterday at Ziggida Church Of Christ in Lofa County, Liberia. Thanks for the great work in Lofa through Wegee Weegie Beyan." I just read that Liberia is the 8th poorest nation in the world right now. They are having some ongoing struggles with violence, but it is awesome that we have some good news from Liberia this week.

This one comes to us from the Palm Beach Lakes congregation down in Florida (where our own Theresa used to worship before moving to Madison). My friend David, who preaches there, says that, "We rejoice with Sterling St-Cyr who was baptized into Christ last night! He is a friend of Justin Kelly, Jr. who was baptized just a few weeks ago. To God Be the Glory!!" And that, by the way, is how the church grows, when one friend tells another how to find Jesus. Good news from Florida!

And the last one today comes to us from John Pigg, who coordinates some mission work down in Mexico. He posted on January 2 and says, "We rejoice with angels in heaven over the baptism of Patricia in our new mission church in Huanimaro by Hector, our missionary in Penjamo. He goes to the new near by mission two days a week evangelizing. Mission GTO is off to a great start in the New Year." I personally love the stock tank here. I love that it's efficient with the water, quick to fill, easy to clean, easy to get into, and easy to gather around. But, we are thankful for Patricia's decision down in Mexico. As always, we share these pictures by way of encouragement and as our invitation to you to consider obeying the good news yourself. If we can help, if you'd like to study together, please let us know. Pull me aside after worship, or give me a call or send a text to 608-224-0274.

At this time, our brother Michael will lead us in our first song this morning, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper...

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com