



From Our Vicar

Rev. Wayne Walters

James, James, Hold the Ladder Steady! James 1.16-27

James, the brother of Jesus, is believed to be the author of the letter bearing his name. James quickly assumed a key leadership role in the early church - described in the Book of Acts and in Paul's biographical passage in Galatians 1 & 2. He provided a wise and steady rudder in convening the early councils of the church to deal with disputes.

His teaching is 'down to earth', providing wise advice for living a balanced and godly life.

Key themes in his writing are the importance of putting one's faith into practice with care for the poor, taming the tongue, and refraining from judging or discriminating against people. He also frankly warned people against becoming 'worldly' in their behaviour, urging humility, repentance and faith, integrity with money and patience in trials.

This Fathers' Day reading includes the memorable advice '...be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteous life that God desires.' Steven Covey's famed book repeats this advice with 'Seek first to understand, then to be understood.'

Certain statements of scripture have practical effect way beyond their prominence. This is one of them. We can so easily be quick to defend ourselves or accuse another in reactive indignation or anger. This verse is a protection against that human tendency. It subtly reminds us of our goal – a righteous life – rather than having to 'be right' all the time. Right relationship, where there is mutual respect and a commitment to preserve harmony through the bond of peace, is nurtured by this priority of listening.

Proverbs likewise says much on this theme, describing as a fool the person who answers without first listening. Listening is a humbling activity. It acknowledges that the other person has something to say worth hearing. It is putting them and their concerns before our own. It reflects a commitment to believe the best about others and to trust that God will enlarge our understanding and guide us through their words.

The most important listening that James commends is to listen to the word of God that can save us, and to not just listen, but to put it into practice. We could do no better than starting with this verse – being slow to speak and quick to listen – and then acting on what we learn for the benefit of others.

God bless you,
Wayne