

Pastor Brian's
Midweek Message
January 12, 2022

"GOING WITH THE FLOW"

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. (James 4:13-14)

I've heard it said, many times (many times I've said it), "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans". God very likely laughed at me this morning because I had planned on going out to do a little fishing before coming in to author this missive. I should say for myself...I pretty much saw this coming though. As I got up and looked out back toward the canal, I could see a whole lot of sand banked up on either side. That means it was low tide and being that the Myakka River near where we live is very shallow it pretty much shutdown the idea of fishing for the morning. The tide was actually lower than it typically is. I had checked the tide tables over the last couple of days, but there was still hope in my heart that maybe the waters might just be navigable...NOT! Both of my neighbors were seen walking to their docks, fishing poles in hand, and looking at the low water level and cursing under their breath. A few of those details may or may not be true, added for extra effect. But both did go out for a look see. The Apostle James has something to say about the best laid plans of mice, men, and fishers of the Myakka River. At the end of Chapter 4 he (actually God) warns us about boasting about what we're going to do tomorrow. In the passage at the top we are reminded that we don't know what tomorrow, or even today for that matter, will definitely bring. Only He knows that. Only He has perfect foreknowledge of all things. So, before we go off telling everyone about the great things that we're going to do, of the BIG fish that we're going to catch, we should take stock of the uncertainty. God says that our life is *"a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."* We don't have all that much control over it, certainly not as much as we think. This is not the end of the story though. Some practical advice comes in the very next verse, 15. *Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."* All the things that happen in our lives pass by the throne of God before they happen. He allows somethings to occur as we might plan, and at times the consequences of that might not be all that pleasant for us. He alters some things according to His plans, and sometimes He puts a stop to things that will do us or others great harm. He and only He sees the big picture, the total picture. Being that God's essence is perfect love (1 John 4:8) He is always working behind the scenes of our lives for our eternal ultimate good. The Apostle Paul assures us of that in Romans 8:28; *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* I really like how Paul starts this verse off...certainty! It's not that we think that this might be true, or we wish it to be true, we KNOW it's true. God takes everything in our life, whether good, bad, or somewhere in between, and uses it to bring about our ultimate and eternal good. That ultimate and eternal good is our salvation; eternal life in Jesus Christ, received by faith. God works in the events of our lives to draw us closer to Him and form us into the people He wants us to be while we're on this journey of earthly life. What this verse doesn't say is that for us Christians all things will always be good, or even turn out to be what we might think is good from our limited point of view. For many of us we experience the presence and goodness of God more readily and acutely in our pain than in our prosperity and pleasure. God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the land and the sea. He put all things into motion and He and only He orders and sustains all things. God is the one who created and controls the tides, and He has made them so orderly that we human beings can figure out their behavior and predict when they will rise and fall. But being able to predict them doesn't mean that we can control them. All it does is help us to control our behavior relative the inevitable. I guess God's plan for me today was to come to the church early to write this and send it out to all of you this morning. Maybe, if I was able to go out to fish this morning, I might have fallen out of the boat and drowned. Then who would write and send this epistle to you? Only God knows whether that would have happened or not. A little later today I'm planning to have lunch. We'll see how that works out.