

The Barnyard Tragedy

James 4:13-17

The Book of James #7

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or drink, or what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes? And do not worry about tomorrow. For tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Once upon a time, there lived a rooster who had one single solitary job in the barnyard: to wake up when the sun rose every morning and crow. When he crowed, the rooster woke up the farmer, his wife, and the rest of the Charlotte's Web cast. Every morning it worked the same way; the sun came up, the rooster crowed, the farmer awoke, his wife awoke, the Charlotte's Web cast awoke, and the day began. But everything changed on the day the rooster stumbled upon some "fowl" logic. Instead of believing that he crowed because the sun came up, he became convinced that the sun came up because he crowed. And, oh, what a "fowl" tragedy befell that barnyard on that day because of it. For starters, the rooster began to think too highly of himself. Instead of seeing himself playing a role on the farm, he assumed he was the most important thing on the farm. He even elevated himself above the sun. Then, his relationships with the other animals suffered because he thought himself above some of the menial tasks on the farm. Next, the stress of having the weight of the farm on his shoulders was much too big of a burden for the rooster to bear. As a result, he became an insomniac rooster. How could he sleep when the threat of oversleeping meant the sun wouldn't come up? Finally, the stress got the best of him, and they had to tote that rooster off to the house for mentally disturbed roosters. And it was all because he stopped believing he crowed because the sun came up and started believing the sun came up because he crowed instead.

If we're being honest this morning – and we should be because we're in church – we must admit that we succumb to the same "fowl" logic that often leads to the same Barnyard Tragedy in our lives. We use "fowl" logic when we assume we are promised tomorrow. We use "fowl" logic when we assume every breath we take is on our time, not on borrowed time. We use "fowl" logic when we forget that we are but a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. And we use "fowl" logic when we stop believing we crow because the sun comes up and start believing the sun comes up because we crow instead. Life is fragile. It's a vapor. Here one moment and gone the next. But God is sovereign. And the key to maintaining proper perspective in life is living mindful of the aforementioned. When we don't, we'll insert our name as the rooster in the Barnyard Tragedy. So, church, my objective today is very simple. It's to expose you to the "fowl" logic that leads to Barnyard Tragedies so that you can avoid them. To do that, please turn with me to James 4:13-17.

¹³ 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."¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

Barnyard Tragedies Consist of:

1. A Fowl Plan (13-14a)

- **The Best Laid Plans** – (1) The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. (2) Before the days of GPS and Smartphones, people had to purchase a map and plan their trips. Remember those days? Most young whipper snappers don't. (2) If you were traveling from Booger Hole, West Virginia to Scratch Ankle, Alabama, you could plan and account for every interstate and roadway. (3) But you could not account for the falling rocks that forced you to an alternate route in Yum Yum, Tennessee.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Barnyard Tragedies occur when we assume all the things we've planned for are going to come about *simply because* we've made the plans.
- **Main Textual Emphases:** (1) The problem isn't making plans – Over the last period of his life, David planned for every nut, bolt, and board of the temple. (2) The problem is making plans and assuming you have control over them – David planned to build the temple. The problem was God didn't want him to build it. He wanted his son to build it instead. (3) It's that very issue – assuming you have control over your plans – that James ask once simple question: Why?
- **App:** Assuming we have control over our plans means that we act as if we have power and control over our lives. We are not entrusted with this power. God is.
- *"Many are the plans in a person's heart. But it's the Lord's purpose that prevails."* (Proverbs 19:21)

2. A Fowl Vapor (14b-15)

- **Bottled Water Choices** – (1) The next time you go to Cumberland, take a peak at the Bottled Water section. (2) People used to say *Evian* is just naïve spelled backwards. It's true. (3) If you are a Pepsi person, you go for the Aquafina. (4) If you are a Coke person, you go for the Dasani. (5) But if you are a cultured person, you go for the Perrier (I don't drink anything I can't spell, btw). (6) All of the distributors of the water are smart enough to remove sulfur and iron from the water long before it reaches the bottle. (7) Water that smells like sulfur and tastes like iron isn't fit for drinking, even for "naïve" people who buy it.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Barnyard Tragedies occur when we begin to think of life as a right. It's not a right. It's a gift. And thinking of life as if you just borrowed the last breath you took will solve a lot of spiritual issues and questions in your life.
- **Main Textual Emphases:** (1) There are a lot of images in the Bible used to describe life. (2) There's dust. From dust we were made. And to dust we shall return. (2) There's breath. God breathed life into the nostrils of Adam. (3) There's eye twinkling – At any moment, in the twinkling of an eye... (4) And there's vapor. The image here has exhaling in cold weather in view. You see it for a moment when someone exhales in cold weather. But then it's gone.
- **App:** We squander a lot of time on things with no eternal significance. So here's a challenge: each day you wake up ask the Lord to give you something to do on that day that will have an eternal significance.

3. A Fowl Boast (16)

- **How to Aggravate the Fire Out of a Native Texan:** (1) That's the title of a book I read this week. And, friend, oh is it insightful. (2) I like it because my wife is from Texas and it teaches me how to exercise my spiritual gift of aggravation a little better in my mom. (3) What did it teach me? If you really want to aggravate a native Texan talk about BBQ and Mexican food. (4) If you dare suggest any BBQ that contains pork is any good – or the best BBQ you've ever had – those are fighting words to a native Texan. (5) But when you visit Texas, what gets them the most is when you call a Mexican restaurant anywhere within the state of Texas "Mexican food." It's not. It's "Tex-Mex"
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Barnyard Tragedies occur in our lives when we forget – or don't live as if we credit – that all our accomplishments in life are made possible by – and only – through the good hand of God.
- **Main Textual Emphases:** (1) James primarily writes to the Jewish Christians of the Diaspora. (2) And these individuals had accomplished something very great: they went to various parts of the Roman Empire after their temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. (3) Instead of sulking, they started being resourceful and figured out not only how to make a living by the toil of their hands and the sweat of their brow, but to be more prosperous than those around them by their hard work and sweat. (4) It made them self-sufficient, which is a good thing, normally. (5) But it became a bad thing when they thought they had pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps. (6) When the reality was the reason they prospered was because God willed it.
- **App:** The truth test of whether you believe in the good hand of God is in control of your accomplishments is this: if he stripped away everything, would you still consider the hand of God good?

4. A Fowl Conscience (17)

- **The Little-Known Fund in the United States Treasury:** (1) There's a little-known fund in the United States Treasury. You don't see it on any budget list. But it's there. (2) It started all the way back in 1811. (3) It's called the Conscience Fund. (4) Apparently it started when a someone who had a guilty conscience sent the US Treasury \$5 anonymously. (5) To date, it has 3.5 million dollars in it. (6) It should have a lot more; especially from those who work in Washington, DC.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The Barnyard Tragedy occurs in our lives when we clearly know what to do in a situation but betray our conscience and act otherwise.
- **Main Textual Emphases:** The is a summation of the whole passage. Think of it like this: the rooster clearly knew the sun didn't come up because he crowed. But he ignored this and made plans without any thought God could change them. He knew it didn't come up because he crowed but acted as if he's the only rooster who was ever called to crow. He knew it didn't come up because he crowed but boasted that it did. He expected reality to adapt to his fowl way of thinking. But the only thing that happened was just plain ole betrayal of conscience and what he knew was right.
- **App:** It's true following and living according to your conscience can get you into trouble, especially from those who treat their conscience like a resident alien. But it is far more trouble when you move away from core convictions because then you must live with that imposter within.

- *“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (Jeremiah 31:33)*