

Title: A Little Mist. A Lot of LIFE.

Text:

1 Kings 14: 21-31

James 4: 13-17

1 Kings 14: 21-31

<sup>21</sup> Rehoboam son of Solomon was king in Judah. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name. His mother's name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite.

<sup>22</sup> Judah did evil in the eyes of the LORD. By the sins they committed they stirred up his jealous anger more than those who were before them had done. <sup>23</sup> They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. <sup>24</sup> There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.

<sup>25</sup> In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup> He carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made. <sup>27</sup> So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace. <sup>28</sup> Whenever the king went to the LORD's temple, the guards bore the shields, and afterward they returned them to the guardroom.

<sup>29</sup> As for the other events of Rehoboam's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? <sup>30</sup> There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. <sup>31</sup> And Rehoboam rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. His mother's name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite. And Abijah<sup>[d]</sup> his son succeeded him as king.

James 4: 13-17

### **Boasting About Tomorrow**

<sup>13</sup> 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." <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or

that.” <sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup> If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

Many of us aim for stability in life. We like things sure and certain. The job prospects solid. Or the job steady. Steady is good. The bank account above the minimum balance. Health good. Relationships good. Finances good. Equals Life good. And into every life, at some point, comes the jarring realization these bodies, our economy, our public health, our institutions - are far more fragile that we would like to realize. Then, of course, comes the response that many make – they give up. Or they become angry. Tighten the grip of control or shake it all off as a world of nonsense. If you have here today, and you are navigating that course between stability and, well, despair or stability and, well, rage – I believe that God has a word for you. A good word. It may not be a word that stabilizes a middle class life. It is the best word, though, that can come to any life.

Will you pray with me?

Read James...

In case you hadn't heard, it can be hard to find baby formula. Not that this is a particular issue at this point in my life, in case you were wondering. But if that isn't your issue – the stock market is down. Gas is up. 4.85. Or did it go up last night? Price at Costco, other places in Lancaster County...

The economy is down – a recession may be coming. Grocery prices are up. All the while - the worst war in Europe since 1945 is going on. Let's say – peace is down. And, of course, this pandemic still rears its head in our lives time and time again. That means – public health crises are .. up. So – you've probably got something. Something to be anxious about.

At this point – you might be say – Hey! Hey! I came to get cheered up! Not depressed!

If you have been making your way through the church's Bible reading plan – you have come through Saul, David, and Solomon. It is not all good. As a matter of fact some of it is downright horrific. But overall – the borders expand, the economy does well, and people seem to be doing fine.

Then, Rehoboam. Taxed the people. They were unhappy. 1Kings 12

Terrible things happen.

We get the theological interpretation here – sin, turning away from God.

Rehoboam – gold shields gone, uses bronze shields. You know what it is – it is disinformation!

Compassion and reality

People need compassion – not told they are doing everything wrong

Reality – life is up and down.

People wonder about the OT – these are not ancient texts.

You know how bad the world is? The world is bad! It is getting worse. It's horrible.

The world isn't bad. It is a mess. It has always been a mess.

Story about me in elementary school and getting under desk to hide from nuclear blast – how does that help? Those years were not better for nuclear war anxiety.  
Story from Black friend who grew up in the 1950s – those years were not better for him.

We find our place right in the mess.

Hard to believe – reality comes a good news. Even if it is destabilizing.  
James – that's what happens here.

Three things – when life is destabilized.

Key Points –

1) Know where you are headed....

Trip with parents growing up – going to AAA, getting the Trip Ticket – complete map.  
Several years ago – my family drove to Yellowstone. My phone

Battery ran out...what do we do?

You make decisions – lots of decisions...

Some of those decisions – trivial. Right? Whether or not to have orange juice or apple juice in the morning. You stand at grocery store and choose between Amaretto, Chocolate Raspberry, Cinnamon Vanilla Creme, Coconut Creme, Creme Brulee, Vanilla Creme, French Vanilla, Hazelnut, Irish Creme, Toffee Nut, Vanilla Caramel, Vanilla Nut and Vanilla Chai Spice. And really – really, does it matter? But even those – it can take a long time, right? Diet Coke. With lime, without lime?

Some are more important – you are trying to decide about a home project or a large purchase. Maybe it is nearing time for a different car. Or a first date. – time, anxiety. Even fear. We start to ask ourselves – what if I make the wrong decision?

Some seem absolutely monumental – decide if you should ask her to marry you. What job. Where to go to school. What to do about something health related..., when to retire.

At those points – we can become frozen, can't we? Immobilized.

And the voices in our culture – Life is what you make it! You can be anything!

In the movie Alice in Wonderland, Alice came to an icy fork in the road. Panic stung her as she stood frozen by indecision. She lifted her eyes toward heaven, looking for guidance. Her eyes did not find God, only the Cheshire cat leering at her from his perch in the tree above. "Which way should I go?" blurted Alice.

'That depends, . . . ."said the cat, fixing a strange smile on the confused girl.

"On what?" Alice managed to reply.

"On your destination. Where are you going?" queried the Cat.

"I don't know, . . ." stammered Alice.

"Then," said the cat, with a grin spreading wider, "it doesn't matter."

Many of us feel like Alice in Wonderland, we stand at some crossroads in our life and don't know which road to take.

Faith in Jesus Christ.

Keep focused on what you are you really trying to accomplish in life?

Teen years – popularity is so important

Adulthood – focused on raising a family, succeeding at work

Later – our own happiness – this is about me now. Time for me.

Question of this passage – we'll go there. We'll make money! It will all be good....

Matthew 22: 34-39

**Matthew 22:34-40**

**New International Version**

### **The Greatest Commandment**

<sup>34</sup> Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. <sup>35</sup> One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

It is possible to make it too complicated!

Do you know where you are headed?

Some choices – God doesn't care. You are at breakfast. Pancakes or French Toast?

Does it help me love God? You are free!

In this messy world – make it your goal to love God and love people

## 2) Know your mortality

You are mist – Well thank you James.

this comes a bad news for many of us. Often gets translated through a philosophy called existentialism...

All human actions are equivalent and all are on principle doomed to failure.

**Jean-Paul Sartre**

Life has no meaning the moment you loose the illusion of being eternal.

**Jean-Paul Sartre**

We've lost eternity – live in a world without the eternity – try to grab everything!

Part of the reason for the frenetic pace of life for much of our world is that we understand the brevity of this life, but we don't believe that there is anything past it.

Life is short – grab as much as you can.

## 3) Trust in God's Power

If the Lord wishes....

What do you face this week?

Friends – face it in freedom, with the risen Christ at your side.