ST LUKE'S – HOME GROUP QUESTIONS – 8TH APRIL 2018

'BAD THINGS HAPPEN'

JAMES 1:1-12 and PSALM 57:1-11

Sermon outline

- **Who was this James and why did he write?**
- **The Purpose of Trials and Testing**
- **The Results of Trials and Testing**
- **The Resources: Wisdom**
- **A word about doubt**

Possible questions

1) *'James a servant (or 'slave') of God and the Lord Jesus Christ'* (v.1). Would we be happy and confident to describe ourselves in this way? If not, why? (Paul refers to James as *'An esteemed pillar'*, in the best sense (Gal.2:9). But 'pillars of the church' can either be a vital strength, or awkwardly immoveable, obscuring the view. A metaphor for today, or perhaps a 'red-herring'? Food for thought?)

2) What was the significance for James of the bodily resurrection of Jesus? NB His brother's gracious personal appearance to him. (See Mark 3:21, John 7:5 – *'Even his brothers did not believe in him',* and 1 Cor.15:6 - '*Then he appeared to James'*).

3) What are the various strands and themes in verses 1 to 12 that can make it seem at first sight a bit of a spaghetti-like tangle? What emerges most clearly for you?

4) What are the many forms of trial and testing that James probably had in mind? And which ones most seem to bear down on us today? ('The moment we choose to follow Jesus is the moment we can expect trials to begin'.)

5) Why does James not seem to see testing and trials as 'bad'? Why does he say that we should welcome testing and look on it with 'joy' (vs. 2 -4)? Why is this so counter-cultural?

6) What would James say to those who pursue a 'happiness, healing and health' version of the gospel (c.f. *'perseverance'*, *'maturity', 'wisdom'* – see also 3:17*).*

7) Unbelieving doubt (v.6) in the word of God, the work of Jesus and the presence of his Spirit mean that we are simply blown about like waves, says James. What steps can we take to avoid being unstable, 'double-minded' (or 'wavering-minded') (v.8)?

8) Reflect again on the words of encouragement and promise in verse 12. What do they, or might they, mean to us personally? Which other Bible promises have proved helpful to you that you might share? (Peter LeRoy – 09 04 18)