

**7-23-23**

**Sermon: Be Genuine**

**Scripture: James 2:1-13 Reading 510**

**Hymns: 507, 508, 509**

**Theme: Pride, prejudice and discrimination, three things that you would not expect to find in church but you do. Lets see how and what we can do about it.**

**I. Today James takes a "Gut Check"...are you grounded in Christ?**

**A. Notice the point that James opens the second chapter with... We are ALL brothers and sisters in Christ.** In Christ, not based on race, creed or religion. Not based on whether or not we have red hair or blonde hair or gray hair or in some instances like myself, losing hair.

A key word here is favoritism...**it does not exist with God**...it should not exist with us...except where sin is involved...because genuine commitment is an essential part of our faith.

We show favoritism subconsciously because of the way we were raised, personal likes or dislikes, appearances. **But against the gold standard of WWJD**, all of this fails...as portrayed in the movie "The Shack" God is especially fond of ALL of His children!

**B. James reminds us that under the new covenant you cannot be a Christian simply by affirming right doctrines or agreeing with Biblical facts**...you must commit your mind and heart to Christ and the lifestyle he stands for...Do you live a changed life because of him?

Not based on what kind of car we drive or what credit cards we have. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. He dies on that cross paying the price once for all of our sins. Salvation is a gift that has been freely given. Not something that can be purchased.

Matthew 7:1-2 7 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

If we look on the better off in our society as those who deserve the finer things, we are judging them. Yes we are to hold other Christians accountable but we are not to judge.

It is our natural tendency however... remember the parable in Luke 10:29 where upon hearing that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, the expert in the law still had the nerve to ask, "but who is my neighbor?"

Right actions...not just physical actions like deeds, are the natural product of right relationships between you and God via his son, and between you and others because of his son...that's what it means to be "in Christ"...so, what is your current state of mind?

**C. Yes we can examine people using biblical standards but only God knows the heart of a man.** Just the same, we cannot look on the rich with contempt either.

**Matthew 19:24** states: "And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

It was often thought in the Jewish religions and other religions that being well off was a sign of good faith and being in God's Holy fold. Jesus preached directly against that. James heard him and took it to heart.

When the troubles of this world come upon the poor, we take our faith and **we persevere in our prayers and grow closer to God**. When we are looking at losing what we hold dear, it is easier for a poor man to embrace God's word than it is for a man of wealth.

The man of wealth may be able to buy his way out and just about pay for his happiness that does not last while the poor man, he

finds his peace and happiness in God's word. We, the poor of this world are far more likely to embrace God's word and Jesus saving grace than a man who has no need to.

## **II. James Then Reminds Us That Things Are Upside Down**

See verse 5: Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

**A. James is saying listen up, God has chosen the poor of this world to be his.** I am not saying that he did not choose the rich. God chose us all without bias to be heirs to his Kingdom thru Jesus Christ.

The only attachment James put on this is that we love Jesus. Once we understand the price that Christ paid, we will love our savior. When we see with the eyes of our hearts what Christ has done so freely for us, we will have those feelings of love for him.

Verse 8 says "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. <sup>9</sup> But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers."

Does this remind you of something? How about: **John 15:12** "This is my commandment, That you love one another, **as I have loved you.**"

There appears to be an underlying premise here that the have-nots actually have simpler values that are closer to the heart of God...we see numerous times in scripture where God favors the poor and powerless.

This "Royal Law" that James refers to in verse 8 is the basis for all the laws of how the people should relate to one another. Jesus reinforced this in **Matthew 22:37-40** "where he said "all the law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments, and Paul

taught it in **Romans 13:8** where he said we have a continuing debt to love one another...ALL OUR LIVES WITH ALL OUR BEING.

**B. We are not simply commanded to love those that we admire or that we wish to be more like. We are told to lay down our lives for this!**

Just as Christ Jesus laid down his life for us, so we must be willing to lay down our life not only for what we believe in but for those that can seemingly do no good for us. If we are only willing to do what will profit us, then we are not observing Jesus Holy command.

We live a life of showing our appreciation for the atoning work of Christ on the cross by following his command to show love to all of his children, without reservation. James reminds us that is the hard and fast of what "life in Christ" means.

### **III. Remember the Status of the Law Under The New Covenant**

We are sinning against the very heart of the Law. Jesus came to fulfill the law, and we are to show our love of him by obeying that Law. If we sin against it, we are then guilty of sin and we are separated from God's grace. **Here James reminds us:**

<sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. <sup>11</sup> For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. James simplified what Jesus taught. Jesus took it a step further.

In the context of these verses, we must also remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:27-28** <sup>27</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'" <sup>28</sup> But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

**A. The New Covenant James describes says it is not what we do on the outside that matters. It is what is in our hearts.** God knows the hearts of all men and does see what our motives are. We are to be in tune with the "Spirit of the Law". In law school they taught us to always look at the underlying reason for which the law was enacted...only then could we understand the purpose it was meant to achieve. Jesus was all about that!

We should not measure ourselves against one another, but against the true desires or "spirit of God" I think it is for that purpose that the New Covenant provides us with the Holy Spirit to be our constant guide.

**James 2:12-13 reminds us to:** <sup>12</sup> Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, <sup>13</sup> because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

James says "Let the words that come out of your mouth and your actions be as those whose will be judged by the law of liberty. That is the Law that we came under when we accepted and invited Jesus Christ into our lives."

He set us free from the Law which condemns to become followers of the law that gives life. Those that have rejected Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be judged by the Laws given to us in the book of Leviticus and the Ten Commandments in Exodus. We, the followers of the way, will be judged by the measure which we judged others.

**Matthew 9:12-13 says:** <sup>12</sup> On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>13</sup> But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

**B. Jesus commands us to know what mercy is and to show it in our lives not only in the church but also in our everyday lives as well.** Do not show the favoritism that the world so commonly does. Do not give preferential treatment to

those who appear to have more. Rather treat all men as Jesus Christ has treated us and we will learn what the Law of mercy and love is.

**Only God in His mercy can forgive our sins...we cannot earn forgiveness and mercy by forgiving others.** By withholding this to others we are showing that we really don't understand God and His plan for our lives. James reminds us that if we maintain the position of KNOWING this and not DOING this, we drive a wedge between us and our Father!

**Remember Micah 6:8,** <sup>8</sup>He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

**Psalms 9:9-10 is also a good reminder:** <sup>9</sup>The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,

a stronghold in times of trouble.

<sup>10</sup>Those who know your name trust in you,

for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.

If we take Jesus' command to heart, and are genuine with our love of Him, then we will be judged with Mercy. It's as simple...and as hard, as that!

Amen? Let us pray...