

**SERIES: CHRIST - CULTURE - CHURCH**

**SERMON: THE SIN OF FAVORITISM**

**10-6-24**

**OPENER:**

***James 2:1-13 (ESV) My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. <sup>2</sup> For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, <sup>3</sup> and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” <sup>4</sup> have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup> Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? <sup>7</sup> Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?***

***<sup>8</sup> If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. <sup>11</sup> For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. <sup>12</sup> So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.***

**What is favoritism? Greek = prosopolepsia  
(pronounced pros-o-pol-ape-see'-ah)**

**1) respect of persons 2) partiality 2a) the fault of one who when called on to give judgment has respect of the outward circumstances of man and not to their intrinsic merits, and so prefers, as the more worthy, one who is rich, high born, or powerful, to another who does not have these qualities**

**In other words, favoritism it is to prefer someone based on their outward appearance.**

**What makes up someone's outward appearance?**

James paints a picture of giving us the analogy of a rich man and a poor man both entering the assembly. (the meeting of believers). And based on their appearance of wealth they are either given a place of honor or dishonor.

**MODERN ILLUSTRATION:**

Let's modernize this analogy and bring it closer to home there.

Let's say, a wealthy man and a homeless man came into TLC today. One is a high flying executive of a wealthy oil and gas company here in Oklahoma. He drives into church in his Porsche SUV. He is dressed in luxury designer brands and he is sporting a Petek Phillip watch. While the other looks like he hasn't had a shower in days and he doesn't have a dollar to his name.

The wealthy man is greeted warmly by the team and he is seated in the front row next to the Pastors. After church the man is hosted and invited to lunch with pastors and leaders in the church, When people find out the level of influence he has in the market place, after service people are admiring him and looking at him and some come to introduce themselves and greet him.

Now the poor man when he enters into the church he is flagged by our security team as a person of interest, People are wondering why he has come to church so he is suspiciously interrogated as the reason why he is here and he is questioned to make sure he isn't trying to get money from the members or to have some sort of bad motive.

Because this man has a smell that is distracting he is ushered to a separate room to watch the live stream so he doesn't disturb the rest of those attending. After the service instead of getting invited to join the pastors and leaders of the church he gets stares in the foyer as people suspiciously stare at him. No one approaches him to have a conversation. No one approaches him to invite him to lunch or ask him for a coffee.

James would describe this as the sin of favoritism - practicing discrimination and judging with evil thoughts.

**THE SAME WORD FOR FAVORITISM HERE IS THIS PASSAGE IS USED THREE OTHER TIMES IN THE BIBLE:**

Favoritism in the Bible is not just showing special attention to someone just based on their wealth.

### **1) FAVORITISM BASED ON RACE AND SIN**

***Romans 2:11 ESV For God shows no partiality.***

If you read the context before this it is in context to God not showing favoritism to Jew and Gentile; and to those who do good verses those who do evil.

### **2) FAVORITISM BASED ON STATION IN LIFE**

***Ephesians 6:9 (ESV) Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.***

This context is showing favoritism based on someone's station, position in life, or title.

### **3) FAVORITISM BASED ON LEVELS OF AUTHORITY THAT PEOPLE HAVE**

***Colossians 3:25 (ESV) For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.***

> So, do we, as Jesus' disciples, treat people differently based on their outward appearance?

> Do we give special attention to people with money, with position, or title?

> Do we try to cultivate extra favor with those who have positions of authority.

> Do we belittle or are we neglectful to those without these qualities?

> Do we hold biases to people of different races?

Church this cannot be.

## **I. WHAT IS FAVORITISM WRONG?**

Why does James call out favoritism? Why is favoritism so evil?

### **1. IT SHOWS OUR SELF-CENTEREDNESS**

We like to be around people who matter. Around the movers and shakers. Isn't it great to rub shoulders with the rich and famous? We tell ourselves, it's good for me to be around people who I can benefit from maybe it's intellectually, financially... or relationally.

But what it does is it betrays a darkness in our heart, that ultimately we really don't care about others, but about ourselves.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

It is like a networking event. Has anyone been to a networking event? You stand around there is food and everyone is acting chummy with strangers that they have never met. but underlying this event where everyone is polite and kind and has smiles, but really everyone there is thinking about “I wonder when this person will be of use to me?”, “I wonder when this person will open up a job opportunity for me?” “I wonder if this person will bring in a new client for me?”, “I wonder if this person can progress my career”. What it really shows is that we are not there for others, we are really there for ourselves.

**FAVORITISM IS WRONG BECAUSE IT SHOWS OUR SELF-CENTEREDNESS  
AND SHOWS THAT WE ARE ONLY LOOKING  
AT HOW OTHERS CAN BENEFIT US.**

### **2. IT DEVALUES PEOPLE**

It tells people that your worth is based on your outward appearance. “You are valuable because you have money”. “You don’t have money so you are not as valuable.” “You have a high paid position in a successful company. You are valuable.” “You don’t have this position, you are not valuable.”

### **3. IT OPPOSES GOD’S HEART**

Scripture teaches us that all humanity is made in God’s image and is worth dignity, honor and respect.

*1 Samuel 16:7 .....For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.*

The way that God assigns worth and value is looking upon the heart, but when we assign worth and value by looking on the outside then we are making a judgement the exact opposite way that Jesus makes a judgment.

While Gandhi was a practicing Hindu, Christianity intrigued him. In his reading of the Gospels, Gandhi was impressed by Jesus whom Christians worshiped and followed. He wanted to know more about this Jesus that Christians referred to as “the Christ, the Messiah.”

It is told that one Sunday morning Gandhi decided that he would visit one of the Christian churches in Calcutta. Upon seeking entrance to the church sanctuary, he was stopped at the door by the ushers.

He was told he was not welcome, nor would he be permitted to attend this particular church as it was for high-caste Indians and whites only. He was neither high caste, nor was he white. Because of the rejection, the Mahatma turned his back on Christianity.

This is the sin of favoritism. It turns people away from freedom and liberty that is suppose to. be found int he gospel.

## **II. HOW DO WE OVERCOME THE SIN OF FAVORITISM?**

### **1. CATCH THE HEART OF GOD**

*Vs. 5-7 <sup>5</sup> Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup> But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? <sup>7</sup> Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?*

At first glance at these verses it may look like God is saying “rich people are bad and poor people are good. But that is not what God is saying right here. And it doesn’t align with other passages of scripture. James was addressing a culture that is already unjustly biased toward the rich, and he is saying that you should not see wealth as society sees wealth.

*Leviticus 19:15 (ESV) You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.*

We need to recapture God’s heart for people and bring things back into balance. James is reminding the church that God’s heart is to honor the poor. Jesus came to lift up the poor and the down trodden. So if this is the heart of God toward the poor then the church must be the same.

*Luke 6:20 Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*

### **Side Note:**

Wealth can be a corrupting factor in the justice system. Some times wealth can be used to exploit those who have less, in the justice system it is not

always the innocent that gets vindicated, but oftentimes the one who can afford the best lawyers. and this breaks the heart of God.

So, James is saying don't condescend toward those who are poor and don't lift up or idolize those who are rich. God's people are not meant to show favoritism toward anyone, but to treat everyone fairly with dignity and compassion.

*Galatians 3:26-28 (ESV) <sup>2</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

**FIRST STEP TO OVERCOMING FAVORITISM IS TO CAPTURE GOD'S  
HEART FOR PEOPLE. TO SEE PEOPLE THE  
WAY GOD SEES PEOPLE.**

## **2. COMMIT FULLY TO JESUS' COMMAND**

*Vs. 8-11 <sup>8</sup> If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. <sup>11</sup> For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.*

We can say at this point, "wait James I thought we were talking about favoritism. Why are we suddenly talking about the law and adultery and murder? But James is reminding the church of the first command that God gave to His people in the book of Leviticus....."love your neighbor as yourself'. But he calls it the "ROYAL LAW". Why does he call it the royal law? Perhaps because Jesus himself elevated the importance of this command to the greatest command.....

*Mark 12:28-31<sup>28</sup> And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is*

***this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.***

**This Royal Law that Jesus' elevates is the standard that Jesus' disciples are commanded to live out. But what James does is use the examples of adultery and murder to say that you cannot choose to only keep the law in part. In God eyes a law breaker is a law breaker as long as a single law is broken. Whether someone commits adultery or murder that person is a law breaker in God's eyes,**

**ILLUSTRATION:**

**Just like in our law system it doesn't matter if you are a thief and you have stolen something, or you have killed someone you are still a criminal. Just because you have stolen you cannot say just because I have stoLen I am not a criminal because I haven't killed anyone.**

**James is saying that showing favoritism is like saying, " I love my neighbor" but only to those I prefer.**

**The Word is saying you cannot keep this law in part.  
The scripture here is calling partial obedience to God's law a sin.**

**THE ROYAL LAW SHOULD BE THE IDENTIFYING FEATURE WHEN  
SOMEONE LOOKS AT YOU - THIS SHOULD  
IDENTIFY YOU.**

**JESUS' DISCIPLES ARE TO BE KNOWN FOR THE WHOLEHEARTED  
DEVOTION TO LOVING PEOPLE.**

**ILLUSTRATION:**

**If you try to balance on a bike but stay still you will fall. You must fully commit. The only way to succeed in riding a bike you have to fully commit. Go at it with full speed to keep from falling.**

**We must fully commit to all God's law.  
A lot of us are good, myself included, are very good at picking and choosing the parts of Jesus' teachings we like to follow.  
But James calls partial obedience sin.**

**ILLUSTRATION:**

- > I can serve in church but I don't like to be generous with my finances.
- > I can hang out with that person over there, but that person over there we don't see eye to eye; we don't really have chemistry. we're not on the same frequency, but we're not on the same level.
- > This is convenient for me. I like what Jesus teaches me to do. But that part...ugh... don't touch that part.

### **FOLLOWING JESUS IS A WHOLE HEARTED ENDEAVOR.**

**We all have things that we are less willing to let go of, but God is challenging us today "Are you willing to fully commit to follow His ways?"**

**"We only believe as much as the Bible as we practice, If we fail to obey the most important word...Love thy neighbor as thyself". Then we will not do any good with lesser matters of the Word."**

**Warren Wiersbee**

### **SO THE SECOND STEP IS TO FULLY COMMIT TO GOD'S COMMAND.**

#### **3. WE NEED TO CONSIDER GOD'S JUDGEMENT**

***Vs. 12-13 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. <sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.***

**James is telling us here in these verse that we need to be careful how we judge others, because we too, in the same way, will be judged by God. He is referencing back to some of Jesus' teachings.**

***Jesus said.....Matthew 7:2 (KJV) Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup> For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.***

**Jesus is saying, in the same way that you judge others you will be judged and in the same way that you measure others it will be measured to you.**

**THIS IS A TERRIFYING THOUGHT, IF GOD WOULD  
TREAT ME THE WAY I TREAT OTHERS I AM DOOMED.**



**IF YOU MAKE JUDGEMENT AGAINST OTHERS WITHOUT MERCY THEN  
GOD WILL NOT SHOW MERCY ON YOU.**

- > What if God judged you today with mercy?
- > What if He showed favoritism?
- > And He judged you not on the righteousness of Christ and not on His grace and mercy toward you, but maybe on your outward appearance.....on your personal performance?
- > What if His judgment was based on what you could offer Him?

We would be doomed if God was to judge us in that way.

This reminds us of the Parable of the Wicked Servant that Jesus's tells.....  
(paraphrase)

*Matthew 18:23-35* <sup>23</sup> “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ <sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ <sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ <sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. <sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

**HERE IS THE WARNING FOR US AS DISCIPLES OF JESUS.  
FAVORITISM IS INCOMPATIBLE FOR US WHO  
FOLLOW CHRIST.**

**NOT SHOWING MERCY AND NOT SEEING PEOPLE AS GOD SEES THEM  
IS INCOMPATIBLE IN A RELATIONSHIP  
WITH JESUS.**

**IF THERE IS A RACIST BONE IN OUR BODY IT HAS TO GO.  
IF THERE IS ANY SEXIST BELIEF IN US IT HAS TO GO.**

**IF THERE IS ANY KIND OF FAVORITISM BASED ON OUTWARD  
APPEARANCE IT HAS TO GO.  
BECAUSE GOD DID NOT CONSIDER OUR OUTWARD APPEARANCE  
WHEN HE CAME TO SAVE US.**

The Bible says....' *While we were yet sinners He came to save us*'  
While our outward appearance was still in opposition to Him and in open rebellion to Him. He demonstrated His love to us by sending His Son for us; in dying for us.

How can those who have received the mercy and grace of God, not show mercy and grace to those around us?

**CLOSING:**

- > All of us have our biases.
- > You may not be openly apart of the KuKluxKlan but, if you look closely there are people you favor over others.
- > You may be looking at others and saying, You are not on my level and unless you are on my level we really don't have that much to talk about.
- > You don't have the kind of education I have. You don't get things as quickly as I do, You are a little slow on the uptake in compared to me. And we play it off, we really don't have chemistry
- > You know those aren't my people.
- > There are races that we would prefer over others.
- > Could it be that we look at people as they sin according to our past experiences
- > There are biases in the church and there are biases outside the church.
  
- > Can we say, teach me Lord to see others as you see them. >Teach me how to look past their outward appearance and see their heart.
- > Show me if there is a group of people that I have prefer or not prefer.
- > Am I treating everyone with love and respect the way that you have called me to do?

**> Help me to represent your heart to everyone I meet and not just to those I choose.**