

"Mercy for Rennis" | Rev Tim Frickenschmidt | July 19, 2020

Old Testament Reading 1 Kings 21:1-16

21 ¹ Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. ² And after this Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." ³ But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." ⁴ And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, ... ⁵ But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "Why is your spirit so vexed that you eat no food?" ⁶ And he said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" ⁷ And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." ⁸ So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city. ⁹ And she wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people. ¹⁰ And set two worthless men opposite him, and let them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death." ¹¹ And the men of his city, the elders and the leaders who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. ... ¹⁴ Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead." ¹⁵ As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead." ¹⁶ And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

Epistle Reading James 2:1-17

2 ¹ My brothers show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ² 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, ³ 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," ⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ 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?** ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? ⁸ If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. ⁹ **But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.** ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. ¹¹ 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. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³ **For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.** Mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**

Introduction

James 2 begins with imperatives: show no partiality (v1) and judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy (v13). So, what is mercy for James? Three points to speak about mercy: (1) The Sin, (2) The Reason and (3) The Remedy.

Background

1. The Sin (partiality)

- The word **partiality** in Greek translates to "receiving a face" or "to lift the face." The idea is that when somebody over whom we have power bows to us putting their eyes and face to the ground, we raise up their face so their eyes and ours can meet as equals. To not do this for all people is sin (i.e., we should be partial to all).
- James thinks the Jewish-Christians to whom he is speaking should know that God does not treat people differently; God does not show partiality, but they do: giving the rich front row seats and having the poor sit down over there or at their feet (v3).
- Jesus blesses the poor ([Luke 6:20](#)) and the poor in spirit ([Matt 5:3](#)). To be poor in spirit is to be crushed ([Ps 34:18](#)), by failures, faults, sin; crushed so low we feel we have nothing to offer God that He might love us. But, it's usually the financially poor who become spiritually poor and enter the Kingdom of God. So, how wrong it is for the Jewish-Christians to dismiss those who would more likely join them.

2. The Reason (what is the reason partiality a sin)

- In [2:8-12](#), James explains only loving some of your neighbors as yourself shows partiality and that if you break one of the ten commandments you break them all.
- By not helping people like Rennis, we would be breaking the eighth commandment (Do not steal) because we would be stealing from God what is His.
- In [Eph 4:28](#) Paul tells us not to steal but to work to earn something to share with the needy. Christianity says we and our money belong to God and we are to do with our money as God directs; so we're stealing from God if we're not giving. **If we're not giving, Paul says we are thieves; James says we are not showing mercy.**
- What's mercy? Broad sense: undeserved help (e.g., tax collector in [Luke 18:9-14](#)); Narrow sense: forgiveness of a financial debt (e.g., servant in [Matt 18:23-35](#)). The mercy in James 2:13 is both broad and narrow: For judgment is without mercy (Broad) to one who has shown no mercy (narrow). Mercy in the narrow sense of meeting practical needs inevitably grows out of experiencing mercy from God in the broad sense of the undeserved help that all of us need in all of our lives.
- According to James, we call into question the legitimacy of our faith if we aren't radically generous. A dead faith (v17) merely speaks; a living faith acts in mercy.

3. The Remedy (what is the remedy of a dead faith)

- The remedy of a dead faith is Glory; James calls Jesus the Lord of Glory (v1); He is the Lord of all eternal worth. He has done all this for us: He became poor (born in an animal stall); His parents offered the poorest sacrifice for a newborn baby boy; He was homeless, hungry, with no place to lay His head; He died the lowest form of all death. Jesus, Lord of Glory, became the poorest of the poor for us. He gave up His seat in heaven that He might share His seat with us.
- James begins Chp2 as he does (v1) for us to see ourselves in the poor. We are to see ourselves, spiritually, when we look at the poor, physically, because the poor can be mirrors of our souls: we're all beggars before God; dependent on Him. We're all dressed in shabby clothes before God and He gives us His seat.

Discuss

- (¶1b) Quid pro quo; do we or our church (ministerially/programmatic), show partiality?
- (¶1b) (v5) ... has not God chosen those who are poor ... to be rich in faith ... ?
- (¶2b) Why is it wrong for us, Christians, not to help and welcome people like Rennis?
- (¶2c) If we are not giving, we are thieves (Paul) and not showing mercy (James).
- (¶2d) Christians show if their faith in Christ is real based on how they show mercy.
- (¶3b) The poor can be mirrors of our souls; we're all beggars before God.

Conclusion/Application

- Rennis read in a mirror is sinneR – we're all Rennis in a mirror before God and there is mercy for us in Christ.
- See ourselves, spiritually, in the poor; and, then, show them the mercy we have already received from Christ. Give generously, radically, to those in need. In six weeks, our congregation donated \$250,000 to the Benevolence Fund for ESL Covid-recovery.
- The mercy of God in Christ always triumphs over all judgment – so give away the mercy, continue to give away the mercy we have received from God.

Gospel Reading [Matt 18:23-35](#)

18 ²³ "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ 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.' ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ 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. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

By Pete Myers