

The Book of James: Ancient Wisdom For Right now

James 2.1-13 | *Remember the Poor* | May 17, 2020

Favouritism flows out of evil motives

- Behind the curtain of favouritism stands the trait of selfishness.
- Selfish desires nudge us toward those we think can do something for us and they pull us away from those we think can't do anything for us or who might cost us something.
- How do we fight these selfish tendencies?
 - Compassion
 - Opposite of selfishness
 - Jesus was motivated by compassion. NT words for compassion "splagchnizomai" - to be moved as to one's bowels
 - This compassion exists within followers of Jesus but it must be nurtured and exercised or it can become dull and cold. When that happens selfishness is given room to wreak havoc on others.
 - Compassion is a supernatural act. We need the Holy Spirit's power and presence in our lives.
- James is clear: how we treat people flows from what's in our heart...or bowels.
- Practical: Brave self-reflection - what is the driving force behind our actions? Our selfish desires or compassionate love toward our neighbour?

Favouritism violates God's law of love

- "Love your neighbour as yourself"
- Matthew 22:34-40 - story of Jesus' interaction with a lawyer. What is the greatest commandment? "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind. A second is as equally important: Love your neighbour as yourself"
 - Sometimes we treat loving God and loving our neighbours as two separate instructions, placing a greater importance on loving God. We

think that if we do a good job loving God we don't have to do a good job loving others. PROBLEM: Loving God and loving others are equal.

- Bob Goff "Jesus saw loving God and loving our neighbours as one inseparable mandate."
- The people James was writing to believed they were doing a good job at loving their neighbour. BUT James challenges them. They may have been doing a good job at loving their neighbour BUT they were being selective in who they considered their neighbour.
 - As followers of Jesus we do not have the luxury of choosing. EVERYONE is our neighbour, no matter who they are or how much is in their bank account.
- Quote: "We love God as much as the person we love the least" (Lenard Sweet)
- The entire law and demands of the prophets are based on these commandments - LOVE for God AND for our neighbour binds everything together
- ROYAL LAW - Belongs to God our King and it excellent and prominent - this law rises above all other laws
 - Used once in the NT - right here in James.
 - Two things come to mind.
 - ONE: James is emphasizing the fact that breaking this commandment is a BIG DEAL.
 - There is no such thing as little sins.
 - "The law is like a sheet of glass: if it's broken, it's broken. It's no good saying it's a little broken. A sheet of glass can no more be only partly broken than a car tire can be only partly flat. If it's flat, it's flat."
 - TWO: Reminds us that as Christ-followers we live according to a different standard.
 - Bible says we are children of God, heirs to the Kingdom - as such we live under the law of Christ our King.
 - Clear distinction between Kingdom and Worldly conduct
 - In the Kingdom of God we love our neighbour as our self.
 - We don't play favourites

- We treat every human being with dignity, honour and respect
 - In the eyes of God all are equal, all are valued, all are loved unconditionally and without measure
 - We were all created in the image of God and therefore we belong to Him and because we belong to Him we belong to each other.
 - We all carry the divine imprint of our Creator.
 - Therefore, not one person is more important in the KOG than another.
- "Don't let the world leave its dirty smudge on you. The world is always assessing people, sizing them up, putting them down, establishing a pecking order. And God, who sees and loves all alike wants the church to reflect his generous, universal love in how it behaves."
 - True faith rejects favouritism and it embraces our neighbour.
 - To embrace our neighbour is to have the same regard for them as we have for our self; to be quick to provide help when they ask for it; to see them as a child of God worthy of love and respect.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Everyone wrestles with favouritism to some degree. Who are the poor in our lives? Who do we, by our words, thoughts or actions, push to the side in favour of those we see as more important? (poor, rich, immigrants, people of other beliefs...)
- What are some things we can do to begin to change our attitude toward "our poor"?
- What does discrimination do? How does it impact the world?