

## **Living God's Way in Today's World**

### **Week 3 – Do You Play Favourites?**

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

#### **Message Mate**

- James the Just, the author of the Book of James had a passion for justice, including the poor. This passage focusses on the importance of not discriminating between the rich and poor by providing a case study, the rational and biblical reasons why and the consequences if we do.
- As Christians, we are not to discriminate against the poor, especially when they come to share in worship services. If you discriminate based on wealth, you are judging people. You are not seeing them with the eyes of God, but with the eyes of the world, judging them with the world's standards, "with evil thoughts".
- If we discriminate against the poor, we are dishonouring them, just as some were doing in the church at the times of James, the wealthy were exploiting the poor, dragging them through the courts and blaspheming the name of Jesus. We must not idolise the wealthy, their lavish lifestyles, beautiful homes, fast cars, fashion or outward beauty. Be careful how much wrong attention you pay towards the wealthy. Instead, focus your attention on your position in Christ, realising that your wealth is in Christ, not the world.
- We are to "Love your neighbour as yourself". This is called the royal law as it was commanded by our Lord and King, Jesus Christ. At Rangeville, it is part of our value of "Loving Relationships Matter" and should underpin the way that we treat all people with God's love. This value includes "we choose to welcome and love all people regardless of race, faith, culture, socio-economic circumstances, gender, marital/family status or profession." We are called to be a church where loving relationships matter, and we reveal that when we love our neighbour as ourselves.
- If you love your neighbour as yourself, you are doing the right thing in the eyes of God and your community. If you favour the rich over the poor, you are an evil judge and will be convicted and subject to judgement by God. If you judge others without mercy, you will be judged by God without mercy. However, if you extend mercy to others, you will be shown mercy. So, take hope from the reality that mercy triumphs over judgement.

#### **Some Questions to Consider**

1. When you see someone at church at Rangeville who you have not met before, what is your first response? Why? How often do you introduce yourself to someone you have not met before: most Sundays, once a month, occasionally, hardly ever? Discuss why it is so important that we help make people feel welcome to our services?

2. Read the case study in James 2:2-4. Discuss how and why such actions were “discriminating among yourselves”. Consider the seriousness of the statement that if you discriminate, you “become judges with evil thoughts” (or the New Living Translation says, “your judgements are guided by evil motives.”)
3. It is sometimes easy to be impressed by the wealthy and all they have, but we must be careful not to idolise wealth. Discuss the statement, “focus your attention on your position in Christ, realising that your wealth is in Christ, not the world.” How does this impact on your view of the poor versus the rich, especially considering Luke 6:20, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”
4. Jesus told us that we are to “love your neighbour as yourself” and both Paul (Galatians 5:14) and James (James 2:8) reinforce this. Because James 2 is written in the context of worship services, discuss our value at Rangeville that:  
“Loving Relationships Matter”  
This value includes “we choose to welcome and love all people regardless of race, faith, culture, socio-economic circumstances, gender, marital/family status or profession.”
5. James makes it clear that your judgement of the poor without mercy will result in God’s judgement of you without mercy. Yet, we are reassured that “Mercy triumphs over judgement”. How can you extend genuine mercy to others in the church?

Pray –

Thank the Lord that mercy triumphs over judgement.

Ask the Lord to help you grow in mercy and love towards your neighbour.