

July 26, 2020
Willerup United Methodist Church
Sermon Notes
Pastor Marvin Singh
The Book of James, Lesson 3
Favoritism

The Book of James

This is the third in our series of meditations based on the book of James for the month of July and August. This was written by the brother of our Lord Jesus, who called himself a servant of God and Jesus Christ. It was primarily written to Jewish Christians who were scattered in many nations. James talks in this book about practical religion: trials and tribulations, how to apply the Word of God in our daily life, the worldliness in the church and Christian perspective.

FAVORITISM

James 2:1-13

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, my dear brothers: 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? ⁶But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹²Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

The first verse: My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

James reminds his fellow Christians: Who we are?

We Are Brothers.

James joins with the people called CHRISTIANS and says, "my brothers." Brothers, children of the same heavenly Father.

Church, as we gather for worship where is our sight?

Are we focused on Christ? He is the center of our worship. We are restored people. There is no class in Christ (economic, social). We have common new life in Christ, redeemed by the blood of the glorious Lord. We are restored in relationship with God through the glorious Christ.

Acts 3:6

Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

John 14:12-13

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:1-2

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

If we have our eyes on the Lord, how come we discriminate according to the externals, such as to wealth, which is to mix worldly values with heavenly ones, to try to serve both God and mammon (money).

Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

The song writer Ray Palmer (1875) wrote:

My Faith Looks Up to Thee, thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior Divine.

He has saved both rich and poor not because of possession, position, or lack of it.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

As believers in **OUR** glorious Lord Jesus, we cannot discriminate or show favoritism.

We all are beggars before the Lord for his mercy and favor. We all were sinners before him.

Matthew 6:19-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and

where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

It is Christ who sets us FREE.

James 2:5

Listen, my dear brothers: 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?

Look around in our churches, do we value the ones who can PAY or who can PRAY?

Do we look more at poverty than at piety?

John 8:11 (Jesus to the woman caught in adultery)

"Neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Matthew 12:34 (Jesus speaking to the Pharisees who did not believe)

"You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."

Luke 21:4 (Jesus of the widow who gave two coins)

“All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Lord is for sinners who repent.

Luke 5:27-32

²⁷After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, ²⁸and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

²⁹Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. ³⁰But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

³¹Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

God's word says man sees outwardly but God sees the heart.
How do we treat the working class?

Jesus suggests:

Luke 14:12-14

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid.

¹³But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Have you ever opened your home for the stranger, less fortunate, who cannot invite you to their homes?

Remember Mark 2:1-12. It was heard that Jesus was in the house, and the crowd came to see Christ. The house owner even allowed his roof to be opened to let people in, who needed Jesus.

Mark 2:4

Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

Do you consider your home as yours, or given by the Lord to use it for His kingdom?

What about our churches? Do we seek to meet the people of our status, or those who appeared of lower status? It looks embarrassing to me when someone asks what's the name of particular person. We see them, but have never communicated with them.

If we respect the people who are rich, it is like worship of a modern Golden Calf. Respecting a person only because they are rich, and despising the poor, is sin.

What is favoritism?

Webster's dictionary

Favorite: One who, or that which, is particularly esteemed, one regarded with undue preference.

Favoritism: The disposition or tendency to favor one person or class in preference to others, possessing equal claims.

It is also called **partiality** which is the practice of unfair preferential treatment to one person or group at the expense of another.

The Cambridge Dictionary

Favoritism: Unfair support shown to one person or group especially by someone in authority.

The Sin of FAVORITISM

“‘Favoritism’ translates a rare word that is used by the New Testament writers to render the Old Testament Hebrew expression ‘*receiving the face.*’ It connotes the treatment of any person on the basis of an external consideration – be it race, nationality, wealth, or manner of dress. Such favoritism is foreign to the nature of God.”

Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* pg. 1155

We must not look only at the “face-value.”

Let us go through some scriptures.

Acts 10:34-35

God does not show favoritism ³⁵but accepts men of every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Jew or Gentile, God does not show favoritism.

Romans 2:9-11

There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹For God does not show favoritism.

Ephesian 6:9

And masters, treat your slaves in the same way, Do not threaten them, since you know that He who is both their **Master** and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Jesus forbids to respect a person based on appearance because it is wrong when we put circumstances (appearances) before character.

People are right when they put character before circumstances (surroundings).

The Pharisees were condemned by our Lord Jesus as they go for externals. Jesus called them white-walled sepulchers (tombs).

Matthew 23:27

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean."

The sin of partiality is determined by

- a. the occasion
- b. the way in which it finds expression

The world's standard is to consider poverty as a curse.

But God's standard is vastly different.

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus also mentions that it is more difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through a needle.

In both Mark 10:17-25 and Matthew 19:16-24, we find the story in which a rich young man comes to Jesus. He has been following all the commands of the Lord from his childhood. Jesus asked him to sell his possessions and distribute among the poor and follow him.

Look at the rich man's response:

Matthew 19:22-24

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

(Note the needle is said to be the name of the side gates of the main city. There is one main gate and two side gates on both sides of the ancient cities. A camel can bend, and on his knees can cross through the small gate to enter the city, but for a rich man to bend or humble himself is difficult. He is arrogant and depends on his riches and possessions.)

Jesus told the story of the rich man and Lazarus, (Luke 16:19-31).

Beware the pride of the “self-made man.”

Luke 12:19-20

I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." ²⁰But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

There are a number of examples in the Bible or in Church history:

Moses was the son of a poor Levite.

Gideon was a thresher.

David was a shepherd boy.

Amos was a herdsman.

Zwingli was raised among the sheep of the Alps.

Martin Luther was the son of poor miner.

Most of the disciples were poor fishermen.

We see in verse 8, the “Royal Law:”

James 2:8

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

And, now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the

Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

Jesus also commanded love your neighbors as yourselves.

Matthew 5:17

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Psalms 19:14

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

To love your neighbor as yourself is found many places in the Bible, including these examples from the Old Testament Law, from the Gospels telling the story of Christ's time on earth, and from the Letters of James and other followers of Christ.

Leviticus 19:18

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

Matthew 7:12

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Galatians 5:14

The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."