

## Faith Does Not Show Favoritism

James 2:1-13

Favorites, we all have them. My favorite team is the Vikings, Mike's is the Packers. My son's is the Timberwolves, and my daughters is the Lynx.

My favorite milk is chocolate, and my favorite trail is the Pacific Crest Trail.

My favorite island is The Big Island, I haven't been to Kauai so I wouldn't know.

My favorite child is...well, that depends on who is visiting me next.

We all have our favorites, but how we show it is what really matters.

The fourth test that James brings for our consideration: **Is our love impartial?**

Before we get into our text today let's look at the character of God in this matter.

Deuteronomy 10:17, "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and

awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes."

2 Chronicles 19:7, "Now let the fear of the Lord be on you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery."

Romans 2:11, "For God does not show favoritism."

Today James will provide us with 5 elements of favoritism.

### I. The Principle v. 1

James 2:1, "My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism."

This doesn't mean we treat everyone equally rude. No, kindness is still one of the fruits of the Spirit. Nor does it mean that we withhold respect from those in authority. Scripture is clear that we are to demonstrate respect for those who are in roles of authority.

So, what does it mean? Let's look at James' second element:

### II. The Example v. 2-4

James 2:2-4, “Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. 3 If 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,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”

That is a great example. How do we, Log Church, treat people as they come into our meeting? I think we do pretty well. Our culture of loving one another really prepares our hearts to reach out and welcome all that come to our church.

How do we take this value with us as we leave the church?

Proverbs 28:21, “To show partiality is not good—yet a person will do wrong for a piece of bread.”

The author of this Proverb identifies how easily we can be motivated by our own wants and desires. What would draw you away from being impartial?

In Deuteronomy we are taught how to deal with the poor.

Deuteronomy 15:7-11, “If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. 8 Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. 9 Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.”

Our church family has been generous to those in need. We see it in the offering toward the benevolence fund. Money that is used to fill the gap with people in the congregation who encounter a financial need. If you know of someone in the body with a need please let one of the elders know.

One of the roles of the elders is to administrate the benevolent fund.

To what extent are we to help meet the needs of others?

1 John 3:16-18, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

That is radical love. That is the love Jesus has for us. Will we love radically?

The third element is:

### III. The Inconsistency v. 5-7

James 2:5-7, “Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: 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? 6 But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are

dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?”

Why are the poor rich in faith? Why? Because their lack of resources has taught them to live by faith. The rich don’t worry about a car repair like someone with an empty bank account. They just buy a new car.

What requires more faith, when you receive an unexpected bill for \$1200 and you have an empty bank account, or you have one million in the bank? Simple question, which requires more faith?

Psalm 68:10, “Your people settled in it, and from your bounty, God, you provided for the poor.”

On my first trip to Africa the one thing I saw in the people was great faith. I was coming from a church that had just celebrated 25 years of existence. I was visiting 6 Rwandan men who started the Evangelical Free Church of Rwanda. They had nothing and they planned to start 55 churches in their first 5 years of existence.

At the time of my first visit, they had already planted 17 churches in the first couple years. They had faith. My church hadn’t planted a single church fearful that

it would take too many people away from the church and the giving would slip. While at the same time 6 Rwandan pastors armed only with faith planted 17 churches. They had nothing!

We visited several of these churches and one of those churches was nicknamed The Banana Church. The church was located in the middle of a banana grove. Our guide told us that this church was especially poor.

As we worshipped with them, they presented each of the members of our team a hand-woven plate with a hand carved spoon. I have it on top of my cabinets in my office. They had nothing but out of love and appreciation for our visit they gave us a gift out of their poverty. That is the quality James is describing here.

The trap for the rich is to assume that they don't need anything or anyone. That trap leads to eternal separation from God. Would you rather be rich and separated from God or poor and rich in faith?

The fourth element is:

#### IV. The Violation v. 8-11

James 2:8-11, "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker."

James here, when he is talking about showing favoritism it has the sense of an ongoing action or continually. The idea here is an attitude or practice of showing favoritism, not the one-time act.

How serious is God about this? Check out:

Malachi 2:9, "So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law."

Israel was punished because of partiality.

Partiality is characterized by selfishness. We show partiality because we seek favor from those we prioritize. Selfishness is not a characteristic of love.

Romans 13:10, "Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

Over and over Scripture tells us to love one another. And last week we saw that our faith requires a corresponding action. If we love people and those people have a need, how can we not help meet that need.

The fifth element is:

#### V. The Appeal v. 12-13

James 2:12-13, "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

James is telling us to live and act like a true believer who has been saved by God's grace. If we have received mercy, shouldn't we in turn show mercy?

Do you remember the parable of the unforgiving servant? It's found in Matthew 18:21-35. In this parable a servant with a huge debt is going to be tossed into prison for not paying, but when he begs for mercy, his master forgives the huge debt.

This servant then goes out and finds someone who owes him a small amount, but instead of forgiving this guy's debt he has him thrown into prison.

When the servant's master hears what he has done he recalls the servant and reverses the judgement on his debt all because he was not willing to forgive as he was forgiven.

Ultimately, how will we respond to James' fourth test of our faith? When the poor or outcast come across our path will we treat them with kindness and care just like we would treat our favorite movie star or athletic hero? How will you do when you take James' test?