

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 29 October 2023
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: James
Title: Don't show favouritism
Passage: James 2:1-13

Outline

1. **Don't show favouritism** vv1-7
2. **...its breaking the law** vv8-11
3. **...and mercy always wins** vv12-13

- If your relationship with Jesus is **genuine**, it cannot **help** but make a difference in your life.
- If it is **not** genuine, it will make **no** difference.
- That's the challenge we faced last week in our James' series; we'll face today, and we'll face next Sunday. I suspect we'll face it every week until we're **done** with **James!** – because James does not mince words – he speaks right to the heart – he cuts right to the heart!
- last week we saw that *Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*, - after the very nature of God himself who is slow to become angry!
- We were exhorted to *"not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* We saw that if we don't do what the word says – we are as foolish as someone who looks in the mirror – sees toothpaste on the side of their mouth – and hair completely messed up – but does nothing about it.
- And we saw that *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*
- ... so yes, if we're serious about Jesus – our lives will be astonishingly different. **Transformed.**
- Well // here in chapter 2 he goes on to give **another** example of the significance difference a **real relationship** with **Jesus** will **make...**
- *As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, **don't show favouritism...***
- So here's where we are heading today:
 1. **Don't show favouritism** vv1-7
 2. **...its breaking the law** vv8-11
 3. **...and mercy always wins** vv12-13

1. Don't show favouritism (vv1-7)

- Do you think the example James gives could ever happen among us?
- Imagine someone famous comes in – someone we all recognised – someone **rich...** and they were **welcomed** and **fussed over...** shown to a seat up the **front** somewhere...
- And then someone **shabby** comes in...
- Big smelly **overcoat**
- Unkempt **hair**
- 3 days **growth**
- Reeking of **alcohol...** //

Preaching Christ....
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- .. and we all feel a little **awkward**... //
- Don't want anyone to feel **embarrassed**...
- So... we suggest they sit up the **back**... where no one will see them... or **smell** them...
- There was a show on television earlier this year.. undercover boss... where the CEO of a major corporation went undercover and started work on the floor... of (let's say) McDonalds...
- Fascinating to see how he was treated when no one knew who he was...
- I know of a church where the minister had someone come in to the church dressed up as a **homeless person** – just to show the congregation their **reaction**...
- What do you **think**?
- what would we **do**?
- how would **you** react? ///
- James says – don't jump to **conclusions** about people
- And don't treat people **differently** on the basis of what you've weighed up about someone's **income** or **ability** or **importance** or **social standing**.
- If the gospel is going to transform your life, it will transform you in such a way that you do not **discriminate** between people... and become judges with **evil thoughts**...!
- Because – we read in v1 - *believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism*.
- Literally – “**Lord Jesus Christ of the glory**”.
- Jesus has been raised from death and seated at the right hand of God – in **glory**!
- Jesus Christ – with **all** the glory of **God**...
- He **alone** rules the world
- He **alone** is the **judge**.
- And if we get the picture of **Jesus'** glory, it makes our measuring of someone's **relative** glory or worth completely irrelevant.
- You know what it's like to see someone in gorgeous dress that they've just brought back from **Europe** or somewhere...
- And we might say – oh – isn't that **glorious**!
- I'm tempted to say – it depends on who is **wearing** it – but the reality is – that our **little bit** of 'glory' is nothing compared to the **glory** of the **Lord Jesus** seated at the right hand of the **Father**...
- So if he **alone** is truly **glorious** – then the woman coming in dressed to the nines for a baptism or wedding – and the labourer who has just dug the trench outside because the toilets are blocked – are on an equal **footing**...
- And James' challenge is simply this – if you really believe **Jesus** is the **glorious one** – then **everyone** here is on the same footing... and must be **treated** that way... ///
- But **WE** wouldn't treat people like this would we?
- Well...
- Perhaps not so **obviously**...
- Not so **openly**.... **blatantly**...

Preaching Christ....
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- But we do **weigh up people** all the time **don't we?** //
- When we meet someone new... we're asking the questions – wonder what their **background** is... will we **connect?** – what's their **profession**, their **standing**, their **education**... their **marital** status... their **income**...
- We try and work people **out**...
- Where do we **stand** with these people...?
- On a **par**?
- **Above?**
- **Below?** (it's terrible isn't it?)
- What are they **like?** – oh look at what they're **wearing**... - ha – check out the **handbag** – that doesn't go with that **outfit**...
- Etc...
- It's just what we **do**.... Isn't it??
- Now – **some** of that – is completely and utterly **normal**...
- And with **much** of – there's nothing **wrong** with it... we're just working people out...
- But it's what we do from that point **ON**... what we **DO** with the information our eyes have **scanned**... it's how we **behave**... it's how we **treat people**... // that's what matters....
- Only **Jesus** is glorious!
- Compared to him – everyone else is on the **same level**...!
- And here's the **reality** for James' readers... it is the **poor** God has chosen to be **rich** in **faith**...
- So there's an **irony**... the ones **they** treated **poorly** are the ones God **himself exalts**...
- The Bible is full of expressions of God's explicit love for the **poor**... what did James' brother – the Lord Jesus - say – *Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God* (Luke 6:20)!
- Interesting to note – it is **still** the **poor** in the world who are becoming Christians at a rate **far far greater** than from among the **rich** in the world! We are reminded of Jesus' saying – how hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!
- So James – Jesus – **exalt** those who are poor, but James' readers **denigrate** them.
- And the flip side is this:
- And here's the reality for James' readers... it was those who his readers were **sidling** up to... giving the best seats too etc – who were the very ones **ripping** them **off**!
- And these are the ones who were **exploiting** the **believers**, taking them to **court** and slandering the name of **Jesus**.
- We don't know **why** there were doing this or what **sort** of charges they were taking them to court for... but the very ones they are seeking to **favour**, are the ones who are doing Christians the most **harm**. //
- In some ways the church at **large** still does this today.
- Over the last two decades in particular, some parts of the church have endeavoured to **water down** its message in order to make the church more **palatable** to humankind of the 21st century...

Preaching Christ....
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- It seeks to **curry favour** with certain **aspects** of society – only to have that thrown back in its **face...** as secular society wants to then keep pushing the **boundaries** of what is **acceptable** and **not...**
- So here's the **challenge...**: (Favouritism is...)

2. ...It's breaking the law (vv 8-11)

- Have a look with me at vv8-9 – *if you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "love your neighbour as yourself", you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.*
- Why **royal** law?
- Because it was referred to by **King Jesus himself** as one of the two laws upon which all the law hangs – **love for God** and **love for neighbour**.
- Showing favouritism then, is **against** the royal law... it's disobedience to the **King of glory!**
- That's how **serious** this is...
- James is not saying '**please try not to do this**' ...
- ..but - this is **clearly against** God's **will**.
- **Dr John Dickson** says "*If I am kinder to the **wealthy** than I am to the **poor**, it is clear that I do not love rich and poor as I love **myself**. I am therefore a 'lawbreaker' or transgressor, one who throws of the yoke of God's will.*"
- It simply cannot be (as you may have thought), that this is not as serious as breaking the law at **other** points.
- I might break the pane of glass over there with a small **pebble** at high speed OR by throwing a **brick** through it – either way – it's **broken!**
- **Treating** people **differently** – for **whatever reason** - is not loving them as my neighbour! Therefore – I break the law. **Christ's** law.
- If we **judge** someone – **THEN** treat them differently - on the basis of how they **dress**, what they **wear**, where they **live**, what their **occupation** is, whether they have **tattoos** or **piercings**, what their **finances** are like, what **political party** they vote for, what **footy team** they barrack for... we are not loving **them** as **ourselves!**
- And, therefore, we are not loving **God** as we **ought!** ///
- To my great **shame....** I **know** there have been people over the course of my life... who I've avoided or given little time to... seen them perhaps as a **nuisance...** people perhaps who could give little **back...** I have not **loved** them or **listened** to them...
- But those who will **return** love or attention, or **throw accolades** or deliver some **earthly reward** – I've paid more **attention to...** //
- In other words – I've broken the royal law – just as James describes.
- What about **you...**?
- **...do you treat all people the same?**
- **Do you show favouritism?** ///
- There's one final **challenge** in the **chapter...**

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3. And mercy always wins (vv12-13)

- Have a look with me – vv12-13 “*speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgement!*”
- ‘The law’ here – is all the commands of **Jesus**... as summed up in ‘love God and love your neighbour as yourself’.
- It’s the **second** time already in the Epistle that James has referred to the law as something which gives **freedom**!!
- How can a **fish tank** give freedom to a **fish**? – it gives the fish the exact right context in which to **revel** in the **freedom** to be all that it was **created to be in – that – in the water**... not that much freedom **out** of the **tank**!
- How can a **law** give **freedom**? In a similar way to a fence at a cliff face – you can enjoy the view without the fear of falling over... so the fence though it may have the **appearance** of being **restrictive**, actually gives **freedom**...
- You may remember the old Anglican collect which talks about the service of God as being perfect freedom!!
- **That’s** the way Jesus wants us to live – his **law** – gives us **freedom** to live the way he **intended** us to live... and **outside** of that – well it can be very **enslaving**.
- So // we are to be **judged** by this law...
- **Not** in terms of **eternal life** – that is a **gift – granted to us - planted within** us... but **one** day – we’ll give an **answer** for how we’ve **treated others**...
- Like the speed cameras – which are no threat if you are sitting under the speed limit... if you are loving your neighbour as yourself – then – no **problem**...! //
- What’s the principle? – *judgement without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful*...
- James is simply showing us the flip side of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:7 - *blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy*....
- **Show** mercy and **you** will be shown mercy.
- **Withhold** mercy, and mercy will be **withheld** from **you**.
- Mercy here – simply means – **kindness – generosity**.
- To be kind and generous to the **poor** // and **rich** // alike – to the **educated** and **uneducated**... to the **lovely** and the **unlovely**... **that’s** what we’re being called to here. //
- **TO TREAT ALL PEOPLE THE SAME.**
- To treat **all** people with the **mercy** - the kindness – the love – the generosity - we have **ourselves** received.
- Because – **mercy triumphs over judgement**...
- Your mercy to the **shabby person** who walks in the **back**...
- Your mercy to the **shy**, the **retiring**, the **awkward**, the **challenged**... to the **nuisance**... the **unloved** and **unlovely**... will **trump** your **superficial, jump-to-conclusion judgement** about them // **EVERY TIME.**
- Our default attitude to **everyone** we meet – is to be **mercy – kindness – generosity**... **LOVE!**

Preaching Christ....
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- **Every time! //**
- And if you're aware today... that this is not in fact that the way you've always been treating others... then – there is forgiveness for you – there's mercy for you at the cross of the Lord Jesus – so some say you're sorry today – “please forgive me”
- ...and help me to be so enveloped by your love, that I – so readily – that I – increasingly naturally – show that love to others... ///
- **DO you show favouritism?**
- Let me finished with v1: ***My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism.***