January 19, 2025 - James 2: 5 -1 3 - "Beware of Discrimination"

Introduction:

James L. Stamps was the first mayor of Downey, California. Downey is known for being the birthplace of the Apollo space program and Taco Bell. It's also home to the oldest McDonald's restaurant in the world.

Stamps was born in Arkansas in 1891 and died in 1980. In the city of Downey, CA he owned almost the whole town. Stamps always dressed like he bought his clothes in the bargain box at the Goodwill. He just looked awful but he was an extremely wealthy man.

One day he was walking on a golf course one that he owned and he was picked up by the police for vagrancy. They put him in jail because he was turned in by people who were in his employment. They had no idea who he was they just assumed that because he dressed so poorly he must have been out of place. He didn't fit their "country-club mentality." Showing partiality discriminates against the poor and lowly, a people who are loved by God. It is important to note as we study favoritism that Jesus endured a mocked trial he suffered cruel beatings and death and not once showed an attitude of prejudice not even to his executioners. We continue this morning after looking last week at the prohibition of favoritism we continue with the examination, condemnation, and the motivation.

II The Examination vv. 5-7

1. James asks some very relevant questions in these verses 5-7. In asking these questions, James challenges his reader to really consider their faith in Christ and to be careful that they were not giving special attention to any one group or people.

2. God is not a respecter of persons. God has not chosen the poor because He is partial to the poor but because they are open to the gospel and receptive to do his will. Though it is easy for man to be partial to the rich, God isn't partial to them. In fact, Jesus taught that riches can be an obstacle to the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:24 *And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

God has chosen the poor in this sense that when He came to earth, He came into poverty. "There is nothing that men dread more than poverty.

Showing partiality shows a dishonorable attitude: It humiliates, shames, disgraces, and insults the poor and lowly person. It is God who has chosen the poor, for the most part, to populate His Kingdom. Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3

3. Isn't it true for the most part that the rich get richer at the expense of the poor? That's pretty much been the story of things throughout the history of the world.

"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him" (Psalm 12:5).

"I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor" (Psalm 140:12).

3. It was around 178 A.D. just a little less than 200 years from the birth of the Christian faith that the Greek pagan philosopher Contra Celsius wrote his denunciation against Christianity and his whole attack on Christianity was based upon the fact that Christians were such common insignificant poor people. He attacked the commonness of believers…and the Jewish faith as well.

4. It was the wealthy of James' day that were the most anti-Christian. In James day many of the rich and powerful were the Sadducees, who by the way were first to persecute the church. The Romans considered our faith a cannibalistic sect of Judaism. They misconstrued the teachings regarding the Lord's Supper. The church did not gain any real degree of respect until the conversion of Emperor Constantine in A.D. 316. Until that time, the name "Christian" was synonymous with outcast, psychopath, and anything else detestable. Next we have the…

III. The Condemnation VV. (8-11)

1. Showing partiality is a sin it violates the royal law of Love! Now James calls this the sovereign law. The royal law, according to James, is "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus cites this as the second greatest commandment, immediately after "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Mark 12:28-31). (Lev 19:18) It is royal for three reasons; it is the royal law of God's kingdom; It is the great law that embraces or includes all other laws. In verse 9 James tells us this is sin. God is not a respecter of persons.

James says that showing partiality is a violation of the royal law. It is a law made by God and if this law is obeyed there will be no partiality.

Why? If you love your neighbor as you love yourself, you'll wind up loving everybody the way you love yourself. If we demonstrate equality of love to one another, meeting needs no matter who the people are, then we show that we are fulfilling the great royal supreme sovereign law of God and you are doing well. The word "well" means excellently. This is God's will.

2. Showing partiality makes one guilty of violated the whole law of God. Showing partiality is just as serious as committing adultery or murder. This stresses the seriousness of partiality. A person's real worth lies far beneath the surface. The Bible tells us, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Folks, when there is consistent favoritism and partiality. If we violate God's law we shall face the judgment of God. That brings us to the…

IV. The Motivations against showing partiality. (12-13)

1. James is saying, "No mercy will be shown to the one who has never shown mercy. It is essential that we Christians be about the business of showing mercy. There is a distinct difference between partiality and showing mercy. When you love everybody the same you show no partiality and no favoritism.

2. We shall receive a mutual reward for our behavior. God is going to treat us exactly as we have treated others. If we have shown mercy, then He will show mercy to us; if we have not shown mercy, then He will not show mercy to us. And note: there is only one thing that will rejoice victoriously over judgment and that is mercy. The judgment of God is going to swoop down and consume a person who has not shown mercy. Our only hope against the burning fire of God's judgment is mercy. Therefore, we must be merciful people.

Conclusion:

James brings us to the culmination of a great argument. Partiality is inconsistent with the Christian faith because the Christian faith is consistent with the nature of God and God is impartial. So, what are some things we can do to apply what God's Word is teaching to our own lives? Here are a few action items to consider.

1. Pray as the psalmist did. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalm 139:23-24). Ask God to root out any favoritism or biases you may be harboring that are not honoring to Him.

2. Find a way to serve those in need. Find a need and fill it. Don’t wait on others, the deacons or your pastor.

3. Make a conscious effort to look at people as being members of one of only two classes-saved and unsaved, not rich or poor. Demonstrate the love of Christ.