

Luke 10:25-37**The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

⁶ With what shall I come before the Lord
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

James 2:1-13

Favouritism Forbidden

2 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. ² 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?

⁵ 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 dishonoured 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?

⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favouritism, 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.

¹² 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.

Intro

Please have your **Bibles opened** to **James chapter 2**, starting at verse 1.

Let me pray first.

Let's pray...

It often **baffles me** when I'm listening to the **news** and there has been some sort of tragic accident – like a **plane crash** – and the **newsreader says**, “*There's no news of the 20 Australians on-board aircraft XYZ that crashed this morning with 300 passengers on board*”.

It's almost like the **other 280 passengers** who are also **missing don't count** – only the **Australian passengers**.

The **same thing happens in the UK** – where they **focus** on the **British passengers** who are missing?

Is it just me **who finds this a bit strange?**

(pause)

It's **favouritism** isn't it?

(pause)

So, let's begin with a **question?**

Who's your favourite Christian? (pause) [*mine is Don Carson*]

If you have an answer to this question – then aren't you **falling into the trap of playing favourites?**

And this could be at the expense of someone **very needy who needs your Christian love** – just as much – if not more – **than your favourite Christian**

(pause)

What's the **problem** with **favouritism** anyway?

Favouritism is inconsistent with God's plan (vv1-7)

Well first up – **it's inconsistent with God's plan.**

[Slide 1A]

James says in v1 – **believers in Jesus** should not **play favourites.**

And the Greek word for favourites literally means:

Judging someone by their outward circumstances rather than their inside merits – so naturally such a person would prefer someone who is rich, or from good stock, or someone who is powerful, or of high standing in the community – to someone who is poorer, or from a broken family or who has no job or a low-paid job.

And James gives us a **classic comparison** in verses 2 and 3.

He **compares** a **rich man** - who comes to a meeting at church and he's **decked out in fine clothes and gold** – and a **poor man who comes into the meeting with filthy old clothes.** And of course, **James' readers give special attention to the rich bloke who gets a good seat** – and the **poor man** – has to **stand or sit on the floor?**

(pause)

James doesn't hold back – he **says** in v4 - **that's discrimination** – and he says people who show discrimination – **are making themselves out to be the judge of a person** – and they have no right to do that all. In fact, James says it's plain evil thoughts!

[Illustration St. Andrew's Day]

We may not have too many poor people in our congregation – and we might not know too many poor people.

But we can still play favourites and discriminate.

(pause)

[Illustration of a funeral I was asked to about 10 years ago – only 8 people at the funeral]

That's what favouritism and discrimination can do?

(pause)

Thankfully that's not the way God works.

See v5 – James says – *God has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith.*

In other words, God's in the business of rescuing people who are lost and in need – and have nothing to give in return.

Isn't that what Jesus came to do?

Luke 19:10 says – *The son of man [JESUS] came to seek and to save the lost.*

And before we think - hang on – isn't Jesus playing favourites himself – he's only come to seek and save the lost?

NO - Jesus is not playing favourites – we are ALL lost – lost to our sin

And we need a Saviour -

And if we think we're not lost – then we are definitely lost

(pause)

Favouritism is inconsistent with God's plan to save people.

He doesn't care what we earn, or don't earn, where we live or don't live, where we work or whether we don't work – he just cares about us – and making sure we are saved from your sin and saved for Heaven!

(pause)

Whereas the rich people in James' day – in v6-7 – they only care about themselves and they drag people poorer than themselves into court – knowing they will bleed them dry of their last penny.

And James says they are blaspheming God –

How are they blaspheming God?

They are blaspheming God by thinking they know better than God!

They are also blaspheming God by showing disrespect to God's plan to give all people the opportunity to be saved – and his inclusion of those who maybe be poor financially but rich in faith.

And they are blaspheming the noble name of Christian – by dishonouring Jesus whom they claim to follow!

Favouritism is inconsistent with God's Law? (v8-11)

Instead, James says his readers and us - must keep the **Royal law** found in Scripture.

The **royal law** being “*Love God and love your neighbour as yourself*” (Leviticus 19:18)

It's called the royal law because Royal King Jesus summarized the whole law by saying “*love God and love your neighbour as yourself*”

The royal law expresses **the love of the kingdom of God** –

That's what the **royal law** is – the **law of Love**!

In our first reading this morning – we read from **Luke's Gospel** – chapter 10 –[If you want to flick there now in your Bibles]

That an expert of the law asks Jesus “*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*” (v25)

What a great question!

Jesus rightly refers the expert of the law to the Bible (the law) and says, ‘*How do you read it?*’

The expert of the law – quotes the **royal law** –

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’

(Leviticus 19:18)

Being a lawyer – he **has to be a smart Alec** – so he asks Jesus ‘*who is my neighbour?*’

Jesus then tells the **parable of the Good Samaritan** – which we all know well –

And the upshot of this parable is that surprisingly it's the **Samaritan man** (who belongs to a race of people that **don't get on with the Jews** – and who are in fact **bitter enemies with each other**) – surprisingly the Samaritan is the **only one who helps the man** who has been beaten and robbed – not the priest or the Levite.

And even more surprisingly – Jesus **doesn't answer the original question** – “*who is my neighbour?*” – but He poses a question of his own: - ‘*which one was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robber?*’

So, I pose the same question to each one of us today –

Who are we being a neighbour to?

Are we being selective?

Are we pre-judging people?

Are we showing favouritism?

[Slide 1B]

Showing favouritism is inconsistent with God's law.

[Turn back to James 2 – v9]

James says in v9 - if we are showing favouritism - **we are breaking the law**

How is playing favourites breaking the God's law?

Well – 1st – **we are breaking the 6th commandment – *do not commit murder* –**
because **the people who aren't your favourites – you dislike or hate – and they**
are harmed emotionally, mentally and socially – and Jesus says we can murder
people in our hearts (Matthew 5:21-22)

2nd – **we are breaking 9th commandment – *do not give a false testimony* –**
because **we are misrepresenting the worth of the people who are not our**
favourites!

3rd – **we are breaking 10th commandment – *do not covet* – because we are**
coveting the attention or favour of the people we show favouritism to!

And James goes on to say – in v10 and v11 – **we can't play favourites with the law**
 – and **pick and choose which commandments to keep.**

It's not like we can say to ourselves ***"I really like God's commandment to not murder, so I'll keep that one – but I'm not so keen on God's commandment to not commit adultery, so I'll ignore that one!"***

No – James says - if we stumble on one point of the law – **we break the whole lot!**

Because - whenever we break any of the commandments – **we are breaking the Royal law of love** – because the **commandments** are summarized by loving God and loving our neighbour.

If we think about the 10 commandments for a moment

If we break any of the first four commandments [other gods, idols, blaspheming and not keeping the Sabbath] – then **we are not** loving God

And if we break any of the last six commandments [honouring parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying or coveting] – then **we are not** loving our neighbour – and also not loving God!

Whereas - **Jesus the God-man** - He kept the law of love perfectly –

He didn't stumble on one point of the law –

He didn't show favouritism – instead - out of love – **Jesus died for the sin of the whole world** –

Showing favouritism is **inconsistent** with Jesus' love for all people.

We need to respond in love – just like Jesus did.

By dying on the cross for our sin – **Jesus has freed us up to love** –

That law of love – which found its pinnacle in Jesus' love – **gives us the freedom to love others. So...**

We need to show love to the people that the world sees - as un-loved, without hope and without value.

We need to show love to the people who can't pay us back.

It will mean – getting out of our comfort zone

Are we prepared to do that?

Who will we reach out to – today – not tomorrow - today?

Will we continue to walk past the poor man or woman sitting outside Coles – asking for a dollar?

Will we ignore the widow who hasn't got enough money for dinner tonight – because her pension comes in tomorrow?

Will we only give Bibles to people in homes? Is it only people in houses who need Jesus?

(pause)

Favouritism is inconsistent with God's mercy (v12-13)

The opposite of not reaching out to someone who is in need or someone who is marginalized or on the outer – is to be judgmental.

Where we make a judgment call that - that person is beyond help –

Where we write people off – as not worth bothering with –

[Slide 1C]

Being judgmental and writing people off – is inconsistent with God's mercy.

That's what James is saying in **verses 12 and 13**

God showed mercy through the cross when he allowed his son Jesus to die for our guilt and sin.

He could have judged us guilty and left it at that.

But no – His mercy triumphed over His judgment.

And James is saying we need to do the same – our love and mercy should come before our judgment on someone –

So which Christians are we hanging around with?

The ones who make us feel good? – the ones who agree with us? – the ones who think the same as us? – the ones who have the same interests as us?

Do we avoid the people who are harder to get along with?

Do we pre-judge people - without getting to really know them?

Maybe they are quiet or shy or withdrawn for a reason – but we've never taken time to find out – or to get to know them?

Maybe they are hurting – but no one asks – they just leave them alone?

(pause)

At morning tea – do we seek out the new people or do we sit at the same table with the same people each Sunday – what message is that sending, if we do that?

Do we seek out the people sitting on their own?

Even the ones who might look cranky?

Do we change tables and speak to someone different, each week?

Or do we play safe – and stick to the people we know we will be comfortable with?

Conclusion

We began this morning – with a question – “*Who’s your favourite Christian?*”

I hope we can see that just like the expert of the law asked an invalid question –

‘*who is my neighbour?*’ - instead of asking – ‘*who should I be a neighbour to?*’

“*Who’s your favourite Christian?*” – is ALSO an invalid question.

It doesn’t fit in with God’s agenda -

We shouldn’t be putting certain Christians on pedestals.

We shouldn’t be showing favouritism to any Christians

Notice in the **parable of the Good Samaritan** –

We are not told anything about the **man who was beaten and robbed?**

Except that **he was a man**.

We don’t know what religion or what race he was?

Because it doesn’t matter.

That’s the whole point of the parable –

We are to be neighbours to EVERYONE – showing love and mercy to everyone –

race and religion and circumstances - don’t matter

When Jesus finished his parable – Jesus asked the expert of the law “*which of*

these 3 was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers”

The expert of the law rightly answered ‘*the one who had mercy on him*’

Jesus' told the expert of the law – and he's telling us the same

“GO AND DO LIKEWISE”

Friends – **we must go and do what the Good Samaritan did** – **go and do likewise** -
treat everyone as our neighbour and don't play favourites!

Let's pray....

Heavenly Father we ask for your wisdom in how we deal with people. Help us not to be judgmental nor play favourites. Help us to show love, mercy and compassion to all people. Help us to love one another as Jesus loved us. Thank you that Jesus lay down His life so everyone who believes in Him, will not perish, but have eternal life. In Jesus name, Amen.

Benediction (1 John 4:7-10)

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Amen