



Good Morning Church Family!

Today we are continuing in our study of the Book of James. James: IN REAL LIFE

We have subtitled this sermon series (IRL) because the Book of James is very practical. You will be able to take the implications of James chapter 2 verses 1-13 (our sermon text for this morning) and begin to immediately apply these lessons in YOUR REAL LIFE ...TODAY.

So far we have gotten practical about how to avoid bitterness, how to flee temptation, last week we got practical about how to read our Bibles and this morning we are going to focus how **not to play favorites.**



Now instinctively we know that it's not ok to play favorites. We teach this to our children, but if we are honest we do it all the time.

The reality is, many of the favorites we have are benign... like my favorite shore is the Jersey Shore, anyone else favor the Jersey shore. I have to admit, I have never been to the Delaware beaches to compare, none of you have invited me.

Another one of my favorites is that my favorite holiday is Christmas, and I think personally that Christmas should be everyone's favorite holiday. My wife claims that her favorite holiday is Thanksgiving...I don't believe her.

My favorite food is Italian, who else loves Italian food the most? Once again I don't think there's an argument here, it's not the healthiest but it is the best,



Now these **favorites** are fine. They are benign, and NOT what James is trying to address here.

You see church family what isn't benign is when we play favorites when it comes to **people**. That is what James is going to address in our text this morning.

So far in our study of James, we have mainly looked at the real life trials, tests, troubles God wants to help bring **US** through.

But what's going to be highlighted today in our text is the truth that **God wants us to help others too**. He really wants us to think about how we treat people, and particularly how a person's social or economic status might affect our view of them, our treatment of them, our ministry to them.



And so, while it might be ok to have a favorite shore destination, food or holiday.

When it comes to people, God's word says **No Favorites.**

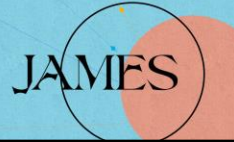
Now this principle is difficult to apply, so as we begin to look into the word this morning let us ask the Lord our God to guide our hearts in Christ Jesus Our Lord this morning.

Pray:

Ok, if you haven't done so already open your Bibles, Bible apps to James chapter 2 we will be starting in verse 1.

James 2:1-4

My brothers and sister, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. 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.



Read:

James 2:1-4

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?

JAMES

Continue Reading:

Ok so James is calling Christians to not show favoritism, and so that we are all clear, favoritism from this perspective is *a form of bias or discrimination in which someone demonstrates a preference or gives preferential treatment to a particular person or group of people, often based on personal feelings, relationships, or other factors unrelated to merit or objective criteria.*

“No partiality,” in the Greek, is literally “*without respect to face.*” Don’t judge someone, or show favoritism, with respect to “facial,” or external, characteristics. This Greek word *prosōpolēmpsiai* is not found anywhere else in the Bible or Greek literature for that matter. As far as we can tell, James made it up...he just may have created a new word for his Epistle.

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JAMES

What that means is that this was a uniquely Christian concept, virtually unknown in the ancient world. They didn't even have a word for what James is commanding Christians to do here.

And so we can tell that James feels strongly about this, and he communicates this strongly because no doubt the early church was engaged in sectarian favoritism.

It seems that they were favoring people within the church based on external features, and characteristics instead of looking within at the heart.

James knows the heart of Jesus so well that his efforts here are a warning against us straying from the heart of Christ.

James 2:1-4

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JAMES

James gives the example of someone coming into the church gathering dressed to the nines, looking important, appearing to have great wealth.....and that person being treated far better than the person who shows up to the church gathering looking poor.

The wealthy man is given the seat of honor while the poor man gets a seat on the floor.

There is not doubt that throughout the history of mankind people have operated this way. Elevating those of wealth while diminishing those who are poor. There are many reasons for this, but one of the main reasons is that often we think about our human relationship in terms of ***what we can get from the other person.***

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JAMES

As evidence of this... if you were to get a credible notice that Elon Musk wants to set up a meeting with you because he has a business proposal to offer you.....most of you are going to take the meeting.

Even if you don't like Elon Musk, even if you don't share his politics, or care for his personality most people will take that meeting & spend that time anyway.

Why? Because we know that Elon Musk has the potential to make us a life changing offer, and so we would move whatever we had to off of our schedule. We would even travel over a long distance in order to make that meeting happen.

James 2:1-4

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JAMES

But what about taking a meeting with someone who can't make us a life changing offer? What about meeting with someone who will instead **need** something from us rather than being able to supply a need we have. You see we aren't as eager to move heaven and earth to make those meetings happen.

James' point here is that this type of thinking/behavior cannot characterize Christian communities.

He says in verse 4... ***“have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”*** Meaning that this discrimination was happening within the Christian community. Instead of being united and treating one another as equals, they were creating divisions based on worldly factors.

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JAMES

James is aware that if the world is going to see Christ through us...the favoritism that can sometimes characterize our communities needed to end.

Because you see Jesus Our Lord would have met with anyone, anytime, anywhere. He didn't care what they had to offer, or what they were financially worth, because He knew that God His Father owned everything.

And so, Jesus was able to judge everyone evenly because He knew that in the final analysis that it didn't matter how finely we're clothed, or how much money we had saved up in the bank, or if we were from the right social or racial class.....**because in the end EVERYONE is created equal in the eyes of God.**

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JAMES

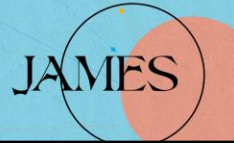
And friends when we begin to show favoritism to those within the church based off of external features/circumstances...James says that **we become Judges with Evil thoughts.**

It’s important that we understand this...***Judges with evil thoughts.*** That statement need some unpacking.

God’s Word has a lot to say about the nature of Christian behavior & attitudes. The scriptures talk a lot about the spiritual fruit that should accompany the Christian life. And so when we hold people within the church accountable to those standards **we are not judging them.** Rather we are **highlighting what the true Judge thinks,** and what He has laid out in His **Word.** It would be irresponsible to not share in love what the true Judge thinks.

The Truth About Favoritism

Favoritism stifles the work of God in Christian communities



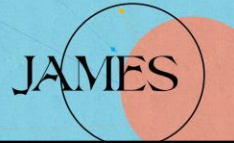
What verse 4 ***is*** trying to speak to, is when we focus on preferences, opinion, racial or social status within the church. When we do this, we become the judges with evil thoughts...this is because we are placing ourselves as the judge, based on what we think, not what His Word commands.

And that brings us to our first truth for this morning:
Favoritism stifles the work of God in Christian communities.

In Mark chapter 10, James and John (two of his disciples) come to Jesus and they ask him for a ***favor***. They ask to sit at his right and at his left in glory. James and John are asking Jesus to ***favor them*** in future glory. Jesus' response to this is that it isn't his place to grant those positions, but that they will go to whom they have been prepared for (typical Jesus answer 😊).

The Truth About Favoritism

Favoritism stifles the work of God in Christian communities



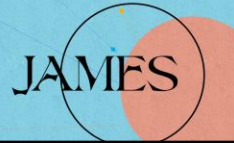
But what's important here is what Jesus goes onto say. He tells his disciples in Mark chapter 10 verses 43, 44, ***whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.***

You see James and John where still thinking transactionally about their relationship with Jesus...how can I get him to favor me, what can I get out of this relationship in the future. And Jesus tried to reorient their thinking to STOP thinking about what's in it for them and to begin to see themselves as servants/slaves to the greater cause.

You see church ***Favoritism stifles the work of God in Christian communities*** because it takes our focus off of looking at others through the eyes of a servant, and instead focuses us on what will benefit me, what will make me comfortable? And that is not Christianity at all.

The Truth About Favoritism

Favoritism stifles the work of God in Christian communities



What Christianity *is*, is meaningfully connecting with people who come from different backgrounds than you.

What Christianity *is*, is breaking bread with people who have different political opinions than you, having coffee with someone who has a completely different social status, or income level than you.

What Christian *is*, is ministering side by side with someone who shares little in common with you...but you are as thick as thieves because you have been redeemed by the same Savior. Your soul knows the same peace and joy. Because Jesus Christ transcends every dividing line Satan uses to try to isolate us. This is the church James is calling them to be in our text, and this is the church the Brandywine Valley/Wilmington DE need us to be.



One of our core values here at Brandywine is Unity in Diversity. *Unity was made possible and commanded through Christ. Therefore, we will celebrate diversity and seek to make our church accessible and impacting for all generations, cultures, colors, and faith backgrounds.*

We believe that ***favoritism*** is a trap of the enemy that will stifle the great work that God has for us to do here...but as we unite under the banner of Christ we become the most powerful force for good on the planet...THE CHURCH.

James 2:5-9

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 dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you?

JAMES

Continuing on in our text James says in verse 5

Read:

James 2:5-9

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 neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

JAMES

Continue Reading:

James seems to be perplexed by the behavior of those he’s addressing here.

He highlights the fact that God “*has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom*” and yet within their congregation they are seemingly elevating the rich and diminishing the poor.

James also mentions that the only people who are oppressing them are the wealthy.

They drag them into court and blaspheme the name of Christ. And so James doesn’t understand the desire to bend over backward to elevate people within the church who [as a group] are more hostile to the gospel message.

James 2:5-9

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JAMES

But I want to focus on verse 8 here, because this is the crux of the matter.

James says, “If you really keep the royal law found in scripture, to “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right.

The Royal Law is first found in Leviticus 19, Jesus affirms it in Matthew 22, but the implications of this verse are found all throughout scripture.

The reason why this is called the “Royal Law” is because it is the law given by our King, Jesus Christ, summarizing the core of God's moral requirements for human behavior. Loving one's neighbor as oneself encapsulates the principles of justice, compassion, and social responsibility.

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JAMES

When you think about this “royal law” to put it into practice sounds scary.

Because to do this...we have to love others like we love ourselves.

Which means...Unconditional Love, Forgiveness Compassion and Empathy. And while most of us can muster these Christian virtues when necessary, we generally reserve this type of treatment for those whom we have ***decided deserve it.***

Meaning we can ***empathize*** with those we think deserve it. We can ***forgive*** those whom we think deserve it. We can have ***compassion*** on those we think deserve it.

James 2:5-9

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JAMES

But that isn't what the “Royal Law” is asking of us, it's asking us to think of others and treat them as if WE were the ones in their situation...regardless of whether or not we think they are deserving.

Because the truth is....

Who among us hasn't needed empathy

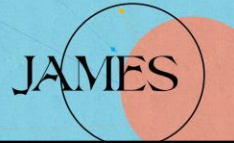
Who among us hasn't needed forgiveness

Who among us hasn't needed compassion

Favoritism within the church is us forgetting that we stand before God undeserving of his empathy, undeserving of his forgiveness, undeserving of his compassion ***on us***.

The Truth About Favoritism

Favoritism defies the law of God to love your neighbor as yourself

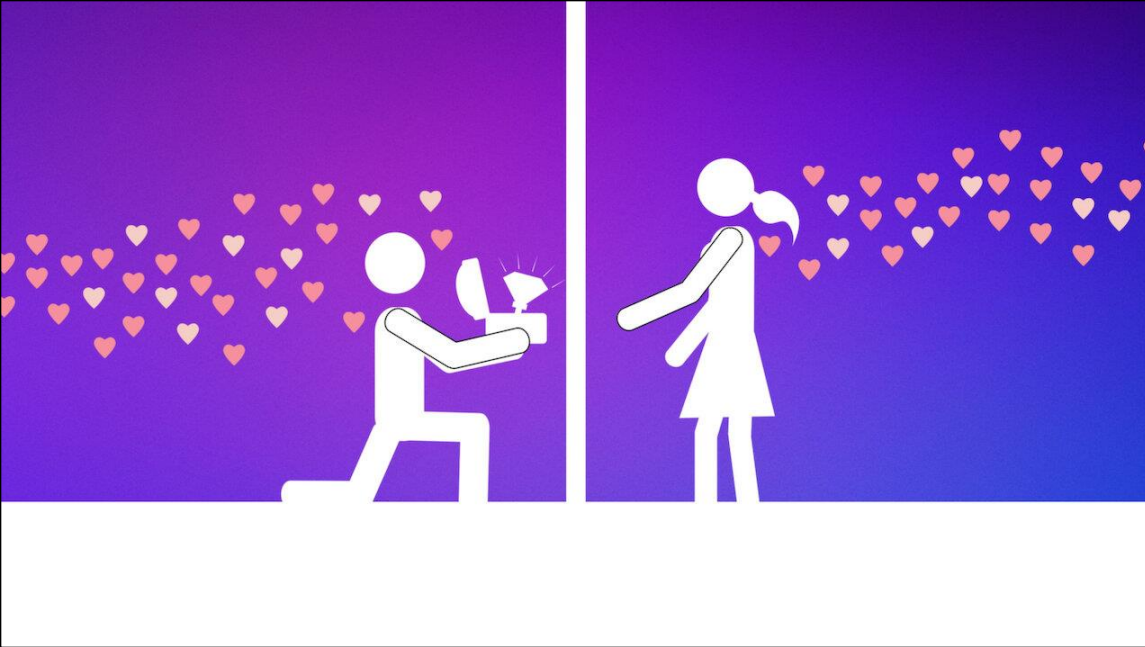


And that brings us to our second truth for this morning: **Favoritism defies the law of God to love your neighbor as yourself.**

Have you found that the closer you are to someone, the more you know of their story, the easier it is to have mercy on them, to forgive them, to love them as yourself?

I think a part of the reason why the “royal law” is sometimes hard to apply is because we haven’t taken the time to get to know the “other.”

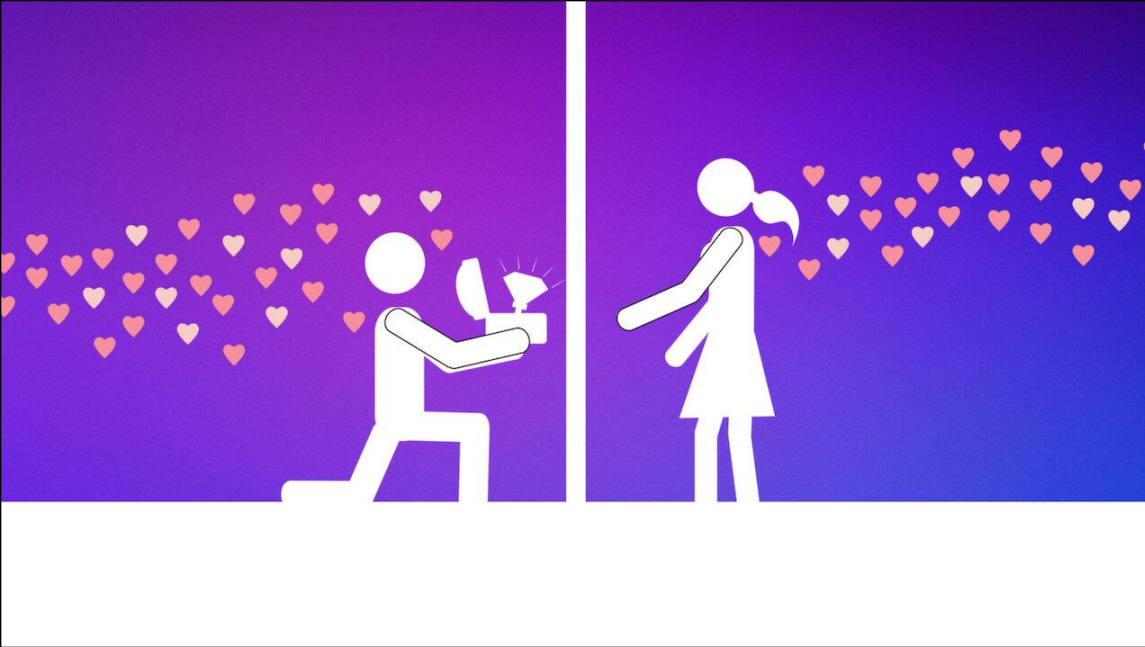
One of the most popular idioms in the English language is that **“you can’t judge a book by its cover.”** How true! You have to open the pages and look inside.



Illus:

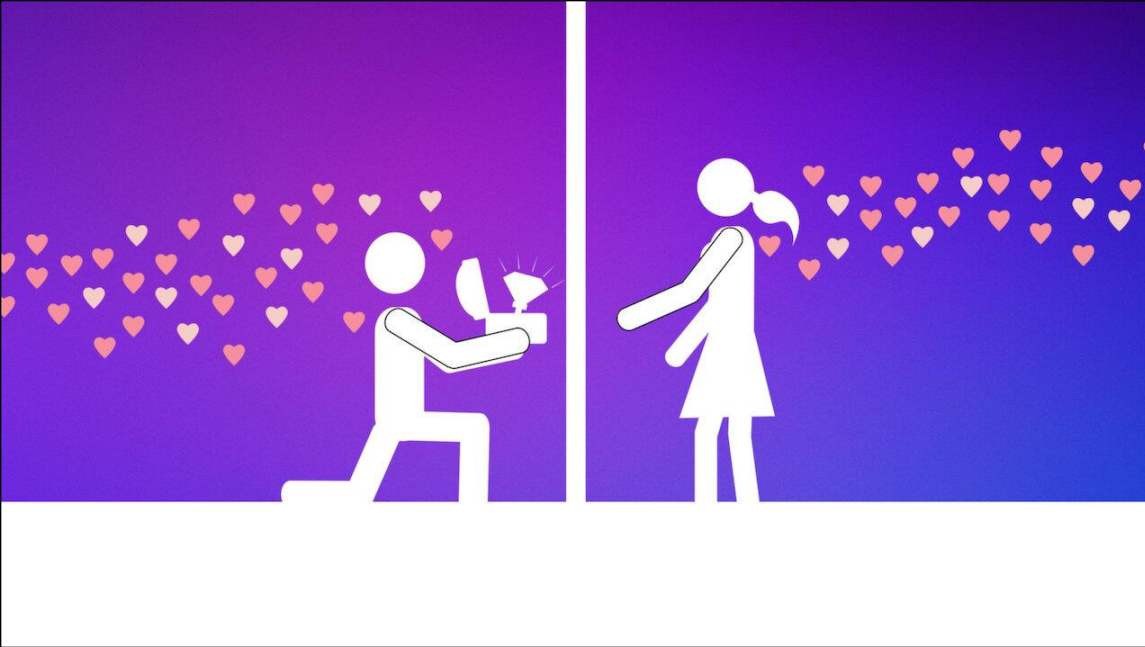
A little while ago I came across an article that was talking about a new reality dating show on Netflix called, "Love is Blind." This show tries to test whether relationships can be successful based on emotional connection rather than physical appearance.

Couples are placed in separate rooms for a series of "dates" where they get to know each other without being able to see each other until the big moment when they're ready to get **engaged**. Then the engaged couples get a month to spend time face-to-face before a marriage ceremony that proves whether a blind beginning can guarantee true love.



Now if you ask me this show sounds pretty stupid, but I hear it happens to be pretty popular. And it makes you wonder what type of person would sign up for this show.

But the show's creator explains the popularity of the show in a time where social media and dating apps make so much of outward appearance they say, [quote] *“Everyone wants to be loved for who they are on the inside. It doesn't matter where you live, what you look like, how old you are, what your background is, which class you know, or social structure you feel like you're a part of, everyone wants to be loved for who they are.”*



Now I've never see this show before...But imagine that what everyone who tunes in is watching for is the moment of ***the reveal***, when the girl who's a 10 get's matched with a guy who's a 3 on a good day, and everyone is waiting to see her reaction when she is expecting Captain America, and out walks Homer Simpson.

And while the outward appearance matters, (*we need to be physically attracted to our spouse*), anyone who has been married for any length of time knows that there is so much more to a person than how they look, where they come from, how much money they make etc.

And so in part I guess what this show it trying to do is limit a potential distraction...so a person can be judged for who they really are on the inside.

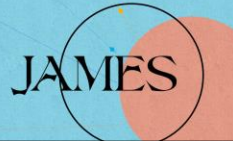


And what James is trying to do in our text is to limit a distraction within the church. A distraction that has been caused by congregations choosing favorites based on external factors.

And as we move on in our text, James is going to make the stakes very clear, he continues by warning about the ramifications that will come if Christians continue in this practice.

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.



Read:

What James is saying here is that as Christians we are no longer under the ***law of bondage***, but rather the ***law of freedom***.

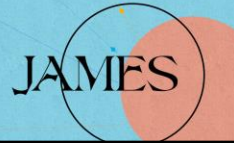
You see friends, the Law of Moses required you to love your neighbor, and condemned you if you failed.

However under grace, you and I are given the power to love our neighbor [*through the Holy Spirit working in us*], and are rewarded when we do so.

Therefore we Christians do not love our neighbor in order to be saved...no, we do so because we ***are*** saved. It is an outworking of Christ in our lives.

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.



When you and I stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will be rewarded or suffer loss according to this standard.

And James exhorts believers to “speak” and “act.” Meaning that what we say should match what we do. Our walk should match our talk...because talk is cheap, anyone can say anything. But the proof that our faith has transformed us is when our lives shift and we ACT more like Jesus.

The warning *[here]* is that believers should avoid partiality. And if we do not heed that warning we will miss out on blessings from the Lord.

[Pause]

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.



In verse 13 we see that just as love triumphs over prejudice & partiality, MERCY triumphs over JUDGMENT.

Church Family it is far better for you and I to be merciful than judgmental.

And I think we all agree with this...but I must confess, if I'm honest, that I find it much easier to be judgmental than I find it to be merciful.

What James suggests isn't that we stop making judgment calls....but rather that Christians make judgment calls with MERCY firmly in view, because we know what great MERCY has been given to us in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Truth About Favoritism

**Favoritism elevates
judgment and
minimizes mercy**

JAMES

And that brings us to our third truth for this morning:
**Favoritism elevates judgement and minimizes
mercy**

Illus:

Peter Brown is a historical scholar, who in his massive study of wealth and poverty in ancient society, traces a radical shift in society's view of the poor and marginalized.

Brown writes that in the 4th and 5th century, "The poor were frequently seen to represent an extreme of the human condition, persons teetering on the brink of destruction and condemned to the outer margins of society." The poor were viewed as *others*, as *those people*.

The Truth About Favoritism

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JAMES

But the good news of Christianity brought about a dramatic change. Brown writes, "The poor were not simply *others*—creatures who trembled on the margins of society, asking to be saved by the wealthy ... They were also *brothers [and sisters]*. They had the right to 'cry out' for justice in the face of oppressors along with all the other members of the 'people of God.'"

What Peter is highlighting is that the world used to operate on just one axis **JUDGMENT**.

And then as true Christianity spread, people moved from being "OTHERS" to "BROTHERS" & "SISTERS." This is a part of what we have to offer the world that it so desperately needs to see from us.



But let's go inward with James' words here. Because each one of us needs to level up in regards to this teaching [IN REAL LIFE]. Because none of us have "arrived" when it comes to this!

In what areas of your life is judgment triumphing over mercy?

What prejudice do you hold in your heart that keeps you from being more like Jesus?

James words here are aimed toward us being more like Jesus, who loves everyone on a level playing field. And so how dare we [the Church] receive His mercy in our lives and then treat others as less than.



I have a Pastor friend back in Colorado who painted the doors entering their worship center red, symbolizing the blood of Jesus. And the idea behind it was that he wanted it to be clear that when the congregation comes in there are NO FAVORITES.

We don't bring our appearance, accomplishments, affluence, achievements, ancestry, or our good or bad works. Regardless of our status or the color of our skin or our past. Those doors were to represent the fact that we are ***all*** sinners in need of a Savior, Amen?!?

Church Family might our doors communicate that same message to our community! May we be that type of Church! And may God get the glory from our lives lived in faith!

Pray: