



10.31.10/James 2:1-7

Opening Discussion

Ask the children if it's easy to tell which classmates of theirs are rich and poor? Do they notice a difference in how the children are treated? Have they treated anyone differently because they had more money or less money? In James 2:1–7, James helps us understand what's going on when we treat people differently because of what they have or don't have.

Read James 2:1-7

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

Discussion

We've all had a time in our lives when the influence of money makes us feel differently about someone. Maybe a person with more money was able to buy us a gift, and it made us feel good, so we liked that person a lot and wanted more from them. Maybe someone who is poorer didn't have clothes that were as cool, and so we were ashamed to hang out with them because we thought others might not want to be with us if we did. When we do these things, we're being selfish, focusing only on what WE want and what we think others can do for US.

Question 1

What is partiality?

Partiality is choosing one thing over another because for selfish reasons. In this passage, James gives the example of choosing a rich man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing over a poor man in shabby clothing. What causes us to do this or similar things is the selfish desire to get what we want, and it shows us where our faith really is: in ourselves and in other people, not in God, who loves us completely regardless of how much money we have. When we have faith in God, not ourselves, we can be with whomever God wants us to be with, and we can trust God to give us what we need, not trusting money or someone else's influence.

Question 2

Why does James say we have become judges with evil thoughts?

If we choose to treat one person better because he or she has better clothing or has better stuff, we are determining what that person is worth in our eyes, not Jesus' eyes. Only Jesus can judge people's true value. He is a righteous and fair judge, and he doesn't base his judgment on what people have or don't have, but on whether or not they've been chosen by God and accepted His gift of salvation. Jesus looks at the heart when the rest of the world looks at stuff.

Question 3

What does James mean when he says they are "poor in the world" but "rich in faith?"

James points out the difference between the spiritual and the physical here. In the last question, we said that Jesus looks at the condition of your heart, and not what somebody is wearing or how much money they have. James agrees with that here. The physical (the things we can touch) might show us that some one is poor in money, but if God chooses them and they love Jesus



and follow His will for their lives, and they are “rich in faith,” which only God can give. This faith is the greatest treasure of all, because it means we will be with God forever! Matthew 6:19–21 says it this way:

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Wrap Up

Let’s spend some time thanking God for being fair and merciful, and for loving us in the way that only He can, by dying on the cross and then coming back to life in order to destroy the sin that would otherwise separate us from God. Let’s pray that He would show us where we trust ourselves or others to meet our needs instead of trusting God. If you want to understand more about what Jesus has done to save His people, ask your parents. When we love Jesus, He helps us love others the way He loves us and them. His love can help us be even more “rich in faith” as we learn to trust Him!