

SERMON TITLE: Do Mercy

SCRIPTURE: James 2:1-17

DATE: October 30, 2022

PASTOR: Charlie Boyd

SERIES SUMMARY

In Scripture, we find the life of faith is often a difficult journey. But true faith in Jesus will show itself in tough times and display the reality of Jesus to a watching world. In the same way, we're called to give voice to our words and action to what we believe. This is how our faith can make a transformative difference in our lives and the lives of others. On this side of eternity, a faith not applied is worthless and will make no difference. The book of James regularly asks us to put our faith into action so others can witness the reality of Jesus in our lives. As we turn towards Christ, our faith journey will be purposeful, fruitful, and sustain us through any difficulty we face.

SERMON SUMMARY

Freedom from favoritism (2:1-4) comes from a right understanding of God (2:5-7), of the Scriptures (2:8-13), of faith (2:14-17), and the Gospel (2:1). In this passage, to "do" our faith means to "do" mercy.

SERMON SCREENSHOTS & KEY POINTS

James is more of a preacher than a writer. In one sense, his letter to Jewish Christians is more like a sermon than a letter. His purpose in this sermon is to encourage his readers and us to put our faith into action—to live out our faith in visible, tangible, practical ways. James calls us to "do" our faith (cf 1:22-25). Last week we saw how "doing" our faith always flows out of what God has made us to be in Christ. "Doing" flows out of the new identity God gave us when we first put our faith in Christ. Before the Bible tells you what to do, it tells you who you are. There's always an "indicative" (a statement of fact about who God is and who you are) that underlies an "imperative" (a command to do something). Remember, the "who" before the "do." The "big Idea" of this passage is to live out our faith in a way that treats all our brothers and sisters in Christ as equals—not favoring one person or group over another. One reason is that God has chosen the poor, needy, and oppressed by calling them to himself. He sees rich/poor, black/white/Hispanic/Asian, Democrat/Republican/Independent, "cool"/"uncool," popular/unpopular, etc., as equals at the foot of the Cross. Anyone who is rightly related to God will do the same. The way we move beyond the favoritisms of our American culture is by keeping our focus on the glory/the beauty of what Jesus has done for us (2:1). The glory of Jesus is that He gave up His glory so we could be clothed with His glory (cf Phil2). Though He was rich, He became poor for us, that we might become rich through Him. That's the Gospel, and it's the only motivation we need to move toward people in need who desire to help them as God gives us opportunity.

Read 2:1-17 — One way of understanding this passage is to break it down like this:

- The Command — As a community of faith, do not show favoritism (2:1).
- The Hypothetical Example — Favoring the rich over the poor in the church (2:2-4).
- The Reasoning — God's heart is for the poor and needy (2:5-7).
- The Scriptural Basis — "Love your neighbor as yourself" (2:8-10).
- The Warning — "No mercy to those who show no mercy (2:12-13).
- The Tie-In with Faith — A faith that does not act to help a person in need is worthless; it doesn't do you or anyone else any good (2:14-17).

COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS

Read James 2:1-17 —

Review: Ask the group how they continued to think about and apply last week's message. "What opportunities did God give you to "do" your faith since the last time we met?"

- What did Charlie mean when he said that "before the Bible tells you what to do (the imperative), it always tells you who you are (the indicative)?" What does the "who" comes before the "do" mean?
 - Talk about some of the examples he gave (Exodus 20:1, the whole book of Ephesians, chapters 1-3 and 4-6, James 1:18-21) What other examples can you think of where God commands you to do something in light of who He has made you to be in Christ?
- Why is this so important? What difference does it make in how you hear something God commands you to do?
- James commands us—"Do not favor one person or group over another." In what ways are you tempted to play favorites? When you come to a church meeting, are there people you might be tempted to avoid? Are there people you want to make sure you hang out with? "What could be so wrong about just hanging out with people who are like you?"
- "Favoritism" is treating people in different ways based on their outward appearance or for what you think you might get from them." Talk about how being "cliquish" is a form of favoritism.
- Verses 14-17 is a highly debated passage about faith and works. What is the debate all about?
- How does seeing how vv14-17 tie into the larger context (vv1-13) help you understand what James is saying about "saving" faith and doing good works?
- What is the Gospel indicative in v1? How does the glory of Jesus become our motivation for doing mercy and refusing to play favorites?
- What else? What are some other "ahas" or "takeaways" from our study in James 2:1-17?

The following resources have been a great help to us in preparing messages for this sermon series: *The Letter of James (NICNT)*, by Scot McKnight; *James (ZECNT)*, by Craig Blomberg; *Mariam J. Kovalishyn*; *The Epistle of James*, by Peter Lange & J.J. Van Oosterzee;

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The Letter of James, by Douglas Moo. Also, I (Charlie) have benefited from the teachings of Tim Keller, Tim Mackie and the Bible Project, and others whom I will credit during my messages. I have adapted and borrowed insights and illustrations from these men and incorporated them into the messages in this series.