

- 1** My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism
- 2** Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby 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: 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 insulted 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 slandering 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.
- 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, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do 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!

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends! I don't know what you have come to do, but I have come to praise the Lord. I want to praise Him for waking me up this morning. I want to praise Him for the ability to study, teach and preach His Word. I want to praise Him for sending His Son so that I have a way to be forgiven of sin and restored to the family. If you have a reason to praise Him this morning then I invite you to make some noise for He and He alone is worthy of all praise.

We continue this morning with our study of the book of James. As I said last week the entire book of James is written to teach us how to live as Christians. As 21st century Christians we would like to think that what James was writing in the 1st century has no value for us. For we don't do these things and these things are not our issues. Unlike the 1st century Christians we are not being persecuted for our faith; we have not had to leave our homeland and live in a foreign land to serve God and accept Jesus as the Messiah. We are free to serve and worship as we choose. So what could James the pastor of the church at Jerusalem have to say to us?

*My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ,
don't show favoritism*

After saying this James spends the next 12 verses providing an example that fit the 1st generation church. An example **they** could understand, an example that had meaning in **their** lives and possibility something he had seen them do or heard about. James used the example of how sometimes we treat rich people and poor people differently. I am sure that I could preach that sermon and it might touch some hearts, but I want to preach a sermon that changes **attitudes and actions**.

So I have labored this week to find an example that would fit our circumstances here on the corner of Orchard and Westwood. I begin to list all the ways in which we **can** show favoritism. Here is my list:

race, religion, gender, intelligence, politics, nationality,

skin color, hair texture, hair style, weight, language

and I am sure if we think about it there are more. In the workplace we often called them isms –

a distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory
an oppressive and especially discriminatory attitude or belief¹

Although we may not wish to admit it we all have some areas in our lives; some places in our minds where we are guilty of preferring one of God's children over another.

Since there are so many isms, places and ways to discriminate and we are so different I am going to ask you to do a bit of work this morning. I want you to take 2 minutes and think about whom you discriminate. Who are those you prefer and those you would rather not be with? Who are those you gravitate toward and those you ignore? When the 2 minutes are over we will pray and work with the theme:

MY ISMS NEED JESUS

SHALL WE PRAY! Father we come to you in prayer for we believe that prayer changes things and we have some things that are in need of change. We want to learn how to be more like your Son and do the things your Son did. We want to be a part of the change that we wish to see in the world. But we know we cannot do it alone. Some of our isms are the result of years of abuse; some are the result of an action that impacted our personal life; and some are so deeply instilled that we may not even be aware of them. We come asking You to make us aware of where we need change and then help us to change. I ask that you use me to preach Your Word, in season and out of season, and that the Word I preach not fall on deaf ears. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. AMEN and AMEN.

MY ISMS NEED JESUS

I asked you to take an honest inventory of where you were guilty of favoritism or discrimination. Now that you have that information as you listen to me talk about my isms I am asking you to substitute yours and see if you can hear from heaven. But I don't want you to go silent on me, if I get to your street and you can't say AMEN, which signals agreement,

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ism>

than just say ouch and I will know I have been heard.

My first ism is my problem with folks who say they are Christian, have had the benefit of good education and lack common sense. You know those folks:

my way or the highway

it has always been done this way and there is no reason to change
I have been teaching the same way for 40 years why do I need to attend
a teaching workshop

Folks who refuse to take off their rose tinted glasses and realize that technology has changed the world and that means the church of Jesus the Christ must change its delivery so that the message may be received. This has been a problem in my life for as long as I can remember. I have a clear memory of my father trying to teach me that there were and always will be educated fools. I can remember discussions with older women in my church as I tried to understand why folks were willing to change everywhere but the church.

My next ism is people who have come to the United States because of the privilege that expect here and did not have at home, but they do not want to learn the language. They want exceptions made for them and materials printed in their native language. I have often thought I could get around this ism, but then I encounter a situation where a person that makes grammar mistakes – because English is their second or third language - are forgiven and the child who speaks and writes Black English is not forgiven, but corrected and often penalized.

Another of my ism is folks who don't want to acknowledge God, serve God, worship God, support the causes of God's people but when they get in trouble they expect you to speak to God on their behalf.

Pray for me Pastor, we are really going through it.

They want the blessings of God and none of the relationship or responsibility. They want visits to jail and hospitals but when the crisis is past you don't hear from them until the next crisis. They want to hold their weddings and family funerals in the church and the church should do

this for free, because we are the church. And not only do they want all of this for themselves, they expect you to do for their family members as well.

Finally, I have a problem with folks who have arrived and forgotten how they got there. In forgetting how they got to where they are they forget the sacrifices of others; they forget their obligation to others and in the words of my mother "they get the big head." Very few folks can stand and say they made it all by themselves. Mother may not have been able to pay the tuition, but she sent what she could and she prayed! Daddy could not solve an Algebra problem and had no clear understanding of Geometry, but he stayed up and kept you company while you worked at it. How can you have that in your background and not feel obligated to do something to help someone else.

One of the first assignments I had as a Corporate Educator was to work with a design team on a course called "Managing the Changing Workforce". We were charged to help managers at all levels be sensitive to their isms, particularly racism, sexism, gender-ism and classism. After one particularly hard day of trying to help managers understand that the company would no longer tolerate "male jobs" and "female jobs" – only white male managers – only female support staff - the explanation that "... would not fit into the company cultural" – an older white male looked at me and said "Why don't we just teach the golden rule?"

In corporate America we justified the changes the company was making with stats – stats that showed if companies failed to change they would cease to exist – either because of the lawsuits they would lose or the business they would lose because they were perceived as not being a place where all were given an equal opportunity.

That is a sound explanation for Corporate American, but what about Christian American. Why should we work to acknowledge and change our isms? James told the 1st century church they should change because the very folks they wish to honor with the good seats were the same folks who were keeping them down. Depending on your ism that explanation

may or may not apply. But I have six that will apply in every situation.

REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT SHOW FAVORITISM

IT IS NOT WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

²⁷He 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'^[a]; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'^[b]"²

IT IS NOT WHAT JESUS DID

woman at the well
Gentile asking for healing for her child
leper

IT INSULTS THOSE MADE BY GOD IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

IT IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'^[a] ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'^[b] ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."³

IT SHOWS A LACK OF MERCY

*Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.⁴*

IT IS SIN

*But if you show favoritism, you sin and
are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.
For whoever keeps the whole law and
yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*

MY ISMS NEED JESUS

What about you?

² <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+10%3A25-37> - •

Luke 10:27 Deut. 6:5

Luke 10:27 Lev. 19:18

³ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A36-40>

⁴ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5%3A7&version=NIV>

¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.