No Partiality:
Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment

James 2:1-13

Key Thoughts

1. **Partiality bends our judgment.** Partiality is leaning toward one side because of what we want, not because of what is true. Believers who hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, are not to treat people the way the world does.
2. **We are to show partiality to no one.** We are not to favor the rich over the poor, the poor over the rich, or the middle class over either. Everyone who walks into the fellowship of the saints is to be welcomed equally, because the same Christ died for all of us.
3. **Partiality can look reasonable.** The "evil thoughts" of verse 4 are not dark and devious; they are purposeful and reasoned, like sizing up one visitor as a likely thief and another as a likely donor. God does not judge by socioeconomic status: He asks whether we love Him, and He calls every person priceless.
4. **Partiality is sin, and one sin makes us lawbreakers.** The royal law is to love your neighbor as yourself, and partiality violates it. Whoever stumbles in one point is guilty of all, so none of us can rank our sins against someone else's and call ourselves righteous.
5. **Mercy triumphs over judgment.** Mercy is not getting what we deserve. We have been forgiven a debt we could never pay, and that changes how we approach, serve, and love the people around us.

Discussion Questions

1. Read James 2:1 and Leviticus 19:15. Partiality is leaning toward one side because of what we want, not because of what is true. Why does God forbid partiality toward the poor as well as toward the rich? Where are you most tempted to lean one way?
2. Read James 2:2-4. When someone new walks into church, who tends to get the greeter, the follow-up call, and coffee with the pastor, and who gets an usher keeping an eye on him? Why can these "evil thoughts" seem so reasonable in the moment?
3. Read James 2:5-7. James's readers were treating the poor as worthless, yet God calls every person priceless and asks each one the same question: do you love Him? How would seeing people that way change the way you treat someone the world overlooks?
4. Read James 2:8-9 and Luke 10:30-37. Who is the neighbor you are most likely to pass by on the other side? What would it look like this week to be the one who shows mercy?
5. Read James 2:10-11 and Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28. It is easy to say, "It's just a little sin," and measure ourselves against someone else. How does "guilty of all" change the way you see yourself, and the way you see people who have broken God's law in ways you haven't?
6. Read James 2:12-13 and Matthew 18:21-35. The servant forgiven ten thousand talents would not forgive a hundred denarii. When you consider what God has forgiven you, whose debt are you still holding, and what would it look like to show them the mercy you have received?

Applications

1. **Welcome someone you would overlook.** This Sunday, go out of your way to greet, sit with, or follow up with someone you would normally pass by, and give them the same welcome you would give anyone else.
2. **Stop sizing people up.** When you catch yourself judging someone by their clothes, their smell, or their wallet this week, stop and remember that the same Christ died for them.
3. **Forgive a debt.** Name one person whose offense against you that you are still holding. Remember what God has forgiven you, and forgive them this week, the way you have been forgiven.

Closing Prayer

Lord of glory, You do not judge by gold rings or filthy clothes. Forgive us for the times we have shown partiality in Your house, giving our best to those who could help us and keeping a wary eye on those who could not. Forgive the evil thoughts that seemed so reasonable to us. Teach us to see every person who walks through our doors as priceless to You, someone for whom Christ died. Make us a people who truly fulfill the royal law, loving our neighbors as ourselves, and give us the compassion of the Samaritan who stopped. Keep us from measuring our sins against anyone else′s, because we have stumbled too and need a Savior. Thank You that You have forgiven us a debt we could never pay. Now make us merciful, as You have been merciful to us, for mercy triumphs over judgment. In Jesus′ name, amen.