

Home Group study: week beginning 25th April 2021

When the Going Gets Tough: 3. Do Not Show Favouritism

Can you think of an occasion when you've prejudged someone and then found that person turned out to be not at all what you expected?

What did you think they were like? What made you jump to that conclusion?

What did you find they were really like?

Read: James 2: 1-13

Do you agree with verses 1-4? What does it mean when it says 'you have... become judges with evil thoughts?' (v4, NIV) What are the implications of us becoming judges?

Understanding

What is the Royal Law? Look at **Matthew 22: 35-40**. What does Jesus mean in v40 when he says: 'All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments'? How many of the Ten Commandments are summed up by the Royal Law?

Jesus doesn't pluck this law out of thin air: he is quoting Leviticus 19: 18 which says: 'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD.' Why does God say 'I am the Lord' at the end of this command? Does that explain why James refers to it as the 'Royal Law'? And, to quote the 'expert in the law' in Luke 10, who is 'my neighbour'?

Looking at James 2: 9-11, how seriously does God treat our failure to love our neighbour? How does this equate to us being under grace not law?

What does James mean when he says at the very end of this passage, 'Mercy triumphs over judgement'?

Application

In the sermon on Sunday an illustration was given of the God-focussed strands of the Christian life (worship and spreading the Gospel) being the 'warp' of the fabric (strands which run along the length of the material) and caring for the poor being the 'weft' (strands which run along its width). This was not a Biblical illustration but was intended to show how God's care for the poor, and his intention that we should help the poor, runs right through the Bible. There are many passages which show how angry God gets when the poor are exploited and badly treated, some even rejecting people's worship as a result of it. (*Isaiah 1 11-18 is one example.*)

Do you think this 'warp and weft' illustration is an accurate description of the Christian life? Should we regard helping and loving the poor and dispossessed as a work that is separate from spreading the gospel? Or should the two always go hand-in-hand? Maybe there a point in the process of showing love to people where the two come together? Discuss!

Jubilee Church has now started the process of coming back to meeting together on Sundays. It may be some time before we're all fully back together. But as we do come back together, do we need to ensure that we work out James 2: 1-4 in our church? If so, what steps do we each need to take?