Lesson 21 James 2:1-13

Rich Man, Poor Man

1. James is writing to an economically depressed community. Why would favoritism be a problem in this setting?

2. How does James 2:1-13 compare to 1 John 4:20?

1 John 4:20

20 If anyone says, “I love God,” but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God\* whom he has not seen.

James 2:1-13

1 My brothers, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

2 For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in,

3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Sit here, please,” while you say to the poor one, “Stand there,” or “Sit at my feet,”

4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs?\*

5 Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those who are poor\* in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?

6 But you dishonored the poor person. Are not the rich oppressing you? And do they themselves not haul you off to court?

7 Is it not they who blaspheme the noble name that was invoked over you?

8 However, if you fulfill the royal\* law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.

9 But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

10 For whoever keeps the whole law, but falls short in one particular, has become guilty in respect to all of it.

11 For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not kill.” Even if you do not commit adultery but kill, you have become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak and so act as people who will be judged by the law of freedom.\*

13 For the judgment is merciless to one who has not shown mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment

3. What are some results of showing favoritism (vs. 4-13)?

4. How would you react if someone came to church wearing sloppy clothes, was dirty or had body odor   
(vs. 2-4)?

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4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs?\*

5. Why do many people give preferential treatment to those with money or influence?

6. Do you think it is easier to have faith when you are poor than when you are rich? Explain.

7. How can "the royal law" (vs. 8) guide our treatment of both poor and rich?

8 However, if you fulfill the royal\* law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.

8. A. On what basis do you tend to judge people?

B. How does Jesus see people?

9. Challenge Question: In what sense is violating one law as serious as breaking every law?

10. The cross is the ultimate example of God's mercy triumphing over judgment. How has the mercy you have received from Christ's cross affected the way you interact with others?

11. What association do you have with the poor?