

Psalms 112:1-9

1st Les. Is.58:9b-12

2nd Les. Mk.12:41-44

TEXT: JAMES.2:1-13

THEME: SHOW NO PARTIALITY

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we live in a society where there is a tendency to give people respect depending on their outward appearance. We fail to understand that appearance is deceptive and that all of us are human beings and have the same human feelings irrespective of who we are. We are all created in the image of God and deserve respect and fair treatment. Following our text and lessons, I will like us to meditate on the theme, "Show no partiality". Another word to explain what partiality is or 'partia' as some people call it is favouritism. Partiality or favouritism makes us treat people differently depending on our connections to the people and what we personally stand to gain from them. We respect and treat people well because of their social class, village, city or country, their financial status, or level of education. Partiality brings discrimination among us and this goes on every day in our society. In work places we see partiality where promotion is no longer a matter of being competent and productive, but by trying to get into the good books of certain people. Sometimes to gain employment you need to change your name to show that you are from a certain part of the country or from a particular family that is respected. Partiality has become a canker worm that is eating deep into various areas of life in our society. Decisions are no longer objective but based on what some few influential people want. In our schools some students gain unfair advantage even though they do not perform no better than the rest. There is partiality even in families where some children receive biased treatment based on certain qualities they have that they cannot change by themselves. And sadly, partiality is also found among Christians. It has been a serious problem right from the time of the early church when Apostle James wrote this text.

The particular problem in the church at that time of the apostle James was discrimination between the rich and the poor. Some rich and influential Christians had become full of themselves, filled with pride and arrogance. Instead of teaching them to be humble and see themselves with others as fellow brothers and sisters before God, there was open discrimination and bias between the rich and poor Christian. The rich were respected and treated so well, but the poor were openly humiliated and disgraced. That is why in the example given in our text, respect was given to a man who walked into a church all because he was wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes. A gold ring was a sign of authority and riches. While the rich man was given all respect and carefully taken to a nice seat, see the shabby treatment they gave to the other person; 'Stand here! Sit there!'. The latter was treated as if he is not a human being and as if he has no feelings. This is not fair at all. Simply because the appearance of the other man attracted so much attention he was given better treatment and respect than this other person. Such respect was based only on outward appearance and so was clearly out of place. It is undue respect. That is favouritism. That is discrimination and that is partiality. If the man was politely ushered to a good seat just like the first person there would have been no problem. But all he received was poor treatment and open disgrace.

Because of partiality people are neglected, marginalized, despised and rejected for no just reason. People have suffered, they have received unfair treatment because of 'partiality'. Partiality creates distrust among people and wherever there is partiality, there is jealousy, there is resentment and hurts in the minds of people. Partiality drains out energy from us, takes away our joy and peace and leaves people wounded and bleeding inside. Partiality is bad.

That is why in our text the apostle James calls on early Christian believers and us today not to practise partiality. Though there are economic and class separations among people in the world, that should not influence us in our attitude and behaviour as Christians. We must be different. We must treat each other as human beings. We should always remember that we can do many things to people but they can never forget how we make them feel. So do unto others what you would like others to do to you. Remember the law of the kingdom of God and put into practice. 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'. Your neighbour is any person you meet anywhere irrespective of social status, or where they come from. The love of God in us must enable us to overcome all barriers of discrimination and partiality.

Perhaps you yourself are being treated unfairly and suffering from the partiality or discrimination of others. Lift up your eyes of faith to God and you will find all the strength and courage you need to persevere. God wants us to know that though you may be poor in the eyes of this world, you may not be respected and given fair treatment like others, but before God you are precious. Our God has great compassion and will help us to overcome all discrimination against us. But as for you and I show no partiality to others no matter how difficult it may be. To God be the glory. Amen.

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