

Sermon Series: Avoiding Politically Correct Christianity—Lord of Life Lutheran—3/11/2001

Title: “The Prejudice Trap”

Text: James 2: 1-13

Theme: Although prejudice is, officially, “*politically incorrect*”, there is a subtle and evil presence of it within our society and often it creeps into the church. Yet, in Christ there is no place for it within the Body of Christ, and we are challenged to work to bring God’s unconditional grace and love to all people.

The various forms that prejudice takes

- **Racial**—*letting Satan convince me of the lie that God lives in and loves white, American suburbia*
 - **ILLUS.: COLORED PEOPLE**
- **Economic**—*gullible to thinking that climbing the socio-economic ladder gets me closer to heaven than the next guy*
 - **ILLUS.: NAMES KIDS GIVE OTHER KIDS AT SCHOOL**
- **Religious**—*believing only German Lutherans will be in heaven someday—you better tell that to the Swedes & Norse*
 - **ILLUS.: “Laid down his `Swede’ head”**
- **Political**—*thinking the God voted for George Bush in the last election and he left no hanging chad on his ballot*
- **Philosophical**—*advocating traditional family values which translated means: Do it my way!*

Why prejudice finds a place but really has no place within the Body of Christ

- **PRINT AND READ JAMES 2: 1-11**
- **Because it is the antithesis of the Gospel and Great Commission** (vs. 1)
 1. **Favoritism = showing another face, a mask, a deception**—it comes from the Father of deception, Satan, John 8:44
 2. James says “*faith in our glorious Lord Jesus*” and “*favoritism*” don’t mix (like oil and water)
 3. It denies John 3: 16 and makes God out to be a liar and Jesus into a bigot
 4. “*Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.” Acts 10:35*
 5. It diminishes outreach to selective in-breeding and eventually snuffs the life right out of a church/church body
 6. Our opportunities in the near future to do real Hispanic/Latino work right here in Westfield
- **Because it dishonors God’s creativeness** (vs. 2-3)
 1. We distinguish and avoid and discriminate against a person because they are not like us
 2. We deny that God could or would have created that person to exist that way—dishonoring them and God
 3. **ILLUS.: If you doubt God’s creativity, just look at how many different kinds of sparrows there are**
- **Because it is sin** (vs. 4)
 1. James calls it “*ponaeros*”—evil/ of the Evil One
 2. If Satan gets me to sin against another by denying that they can be accepted and forgiven by God, he can do it to me
 3. **ILLUS.: WHO WILL SAVE THE DROWNING?**
- **Because it is a form of denial** (vs. 5-7)
 1. We judge another’s fitness for the kingdom of God and fellowship of believers when none of us was in 1st place
 2. Often our first impressions of the “acceptable people” are mis-perceptions which later bite us
 3. *Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 1 Cor. 1:26-30*
 4. **ILLUS.: “A wretch like me. . .” (The rest of the story)**
- **Because of the law of love and freedom** (vs. 8-12)
 1. When we hold others to an unachievable standard, we also will fall and be killed by that standard
 2. Jesus has freed us up to live not under law but under grace
 3. The heart of our relationship with others—no matter their skin color or believe—comes from the heart of Jesus’ grace
 4. Jesus actually gives us His spirit and power to love the “*unloveables*” (the prostitutes, lepers, poor he touched)
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• **Because of the mercy principle** (vs. 13)

1. **ILLUS.: A CASE STUDY OF A MUGGING**

2. *"Mercy triumphs over judgment"* – when we come to truly know Jesus and understand that it is only by the grace of God, then we will--unconditionally--show unprejudiced love and mercy and acceptance to others--no matter what
3. *"But by the grace of God I am what I am. and his grace to me was not without effect." 1 Cor. 15:10*

Color'd People

At a Promise Keepers Conference in Detroit, African-American minister Raleigh Washington said: When I was born, I was black. When I grew up, I was still black. When I go out in the cold, I'm still black. When I go out in the sun, I get more black. When I'm sick, I'm black, and when I die, I'm sure I'll still be black. But I found out that when white people are born, you're pink. When you grow up, you become white. When you go out in the cold, you turn blue. And when you stay out in the sun, you turn red. When you're sick, they say, "You look green," and when you die, you turn purple. Now what I want to know is why do they call blacks "colored people?"

Who Will Save the Drowning?

I had an experience from which I will not soon recover. As many of you know, I am associated with the Dallas Cowboys. They graciously invited my wife and me to come to Miami for the Super Bowl. We arrived on Friday, and a guy said, "Hey, Doc. Come on out to the field with us and watch our practice." I always enjoy that, and so I went out to the field. I saw an older man on the side, and I said, "That looks like Woody Hayes." I thought, *What in the world is he doing down here? I'd better watch out!* I found out it was Woody Hayes. On Sunday morning I ministered the Word of God to the men. After their chapel they have a game meal. I usually spend that time eating with them. This time I happened to be sitting next to coach Landry. At the next table was Woody Hayes. I said, "Coach. What's Woody doing here?" He said, "Howie, he's hurting. He needs help. I invited him to come down as my guest. Maybe the Lord will give me an opportunity to minister to him." I went through the floor. You see, when everybody in America was on this man's case, how many individuals, including born-again believers, were reaching out? We don't reach out. We would prefer that individuals like this got their comeuppance--in terms of what James is talking about: discrimination. I had a dear brother in the ministry who went down the tubes morally--bad case. By the grace of God he was brought back into fellowship, and by God's grace restored to his ministry. One time when we were fellowshiping together, I said, "Hey, man, I want to pick your brain. I need some help. Where are we failing, in your judgment?" He said, "Howie, when I fell into sin, it was like going down in the surf for the third time. I was looking over at the shore that was filled with believers that I knew, some of whom were crying, 'Isn't that tragic?' some of whom were cursing, saying, 'You're supposed to know the Word of God; why did you allow that to happen to you?' There were some who were wringing their hands, saying, 'What can we do?' But there was only one who risked the surf to pull me out while I was going down for the third time." You know what we need in the body of Christ right now? A larger core of nondiscriminating people like that man, like a Tom Landry. As he said to me later, "Howie, he's in football. That's my responsibility." You probably wouldn't reach a Woody Hayes. You might not reach a lot of people in other areas. The question is, are you sensitive about the people that God brings into your sphere of influence, in which he wants the Word to go to work, to deliver you from yourself? Citation: Howard Hendricks, *The Problem of Discrimination*

The Background of "Amazing Grace"

"Amazing Grace"--Americans' favorite hymn according to the Gallup Poll--was written by the former captain of a slave ship. That "wretch," John Newton, eventually became an Anglican minister and worked to abolish the slave trade.

A Case Study of a Mugging

When our son, Tory, was just a small boy, we were coming home from Sunday school and church, and I asked him what he had learned that morning. He told me they had heard the story of the Good Samaritan. He proceeded to give me a blow-by-blow description of what had taken place. Back in his unregenerate days, Tory was on the side of the robbers. When he was all through, I said, "Son, what was the spiritual lesson of the story?" It was obvious I had taken him by surprise, and he thought for a minute and said, "That story teaches that whenever I'm in trouble, you've got to help me." It's not the complete answer, but from the view of that man by the side of the road, it is one way of looking at a neighbor. Citation: Haddon Robinson, "A Case Study of a Mugging"

James 2:1-13

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³If 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," ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, 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? ⁶But 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? ⁷Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁸If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹For 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. ¹²Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!