

#1 – JAMES 2: FAVOURITISM & FAITH (Izwe Nkosi / Paz Redondo)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging? Where did you find yourself saying, 'AMEN' or 'OUCH'?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?



James 2:1-4 (Please read verses 1-13)

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If 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,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Romans 2:2 reads, 'God does not show favouritism.' Paul wrote to his young pastoral protégé in **1 Timothy 5:21**, to say, 'Do nothing out of favouritism.' 'The Church', Izwe reminds us, 'should be the one place where all distinctions based on class and social status must not exist.' And yet, as Paz says, 'our prejudices so entangle us in our culture that we don't even recognise them'. We need, she adds, 'to become conscious of our biases and work to recognise our blind spots'.

- *We all hope to find favour with other people, but when does favour become favouritism? When have you encountered favouritism from others that seemed unfair?*
- *Have you suffered from it as a victim, or have you benefitted? (Do you always expect an upgrade when you fly?)*
- *Have you become aware of any of your own previous biases or blind spots? How did that come about?*
- *In what ways do you instantly judge people? (Try a simple test: Who do you criticise or shout at on TV? Badly dressed presenters? 'Stupid' people on game shows? [.....] celebrities on 'Strictly'? – you fill in the blank!)*
- *Do we give special attention to the wrong people (in church or in our lives)? Who do we tend to honour?*
- *Who are 'the poor' – the people we are most likely to ignore? Who doesn't get noticed? Who do we exclude?*
- *Are there people we expect to change before we can properly accept them?*

James 2:14-17 (Please read verses 14-26)

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Acts of practical kindness which meet the needs of others are what real faith looks like in public. William Barclay wrote, 'No one will be moved into action without faith, and our faith is not genuine unless it moves us into action.' Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it like this, 'Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.' He added, 'Without ... obedience, our faith will only be pious humbug... The first step of obedience makes Peter leave his nets, and later get out of the ship; it calls upon the young man to leave his riches. Only this new existence, created through obedience, can make faith possible.' Izwe said, 'The message of the gospel gives hope to the poor and it requires those who have more to contribute to the needy.'

- *What faith action might God be asking of you right now?*