

Justice and Mercy

Walk the Walk: James Pt. 3

We are continuing our series in the New Testament book of James – written by Jesus’ brother. And we’ve said that James is a practical book. James, unlike Paul, doesn’t so much break the gospel apart to show you what it is; James *assumes* the gospel and shows you what your life will look like if you believe it. James is a “walk the walk” kind of guy. And so each week I am reading a rather lengthy passage of scripture – we won’t deal with everything in it – but I want you to at least hear the text. And today we move into chapter 2. So let’s take a look at **James 2:1–17**.

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

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

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For 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.

12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! 14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

So there it is – heavy! - what is it telling us? James is writing to a community of Christians – but we all know there are different kinds of Christian communities. Deanna and I watched a powerful movie this week, “*Women Talking*” about a Christian community that we most definitely do *not* want to be – it was horrific. But today, we’re going to see from this passage James says here’s what *kind* of community you ought to be, *why* you ought to be it, and *how* we can become that kind of community. What you are to be, why you ought to be it and how we can become that kind of community.

Now first point, What kind of community you ought to be. What kind of community are Christians supposed to be? And the answer is a community of justice and mercy. Let’s deal first with a community of justice. So in the beginning of the passage, see it says, (v.1) “*My brothers, who are believers in the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.*” What’s that? Well, down in verse 4 it says it’s “discrimination.”

Inside the church, inside the Christian community, there should not be the favoring of one social group or one social class or one socioeconomic group or one cultural or ethnic group over another, because if there is, he says, “Then, have you not just become *judges with evil thoughts?*” which actually is a term that means judges that take bribes. And he’s saying that if inside the church you *privilege* one social class, or one culture group, over another, you’re just like an official that takes a bribe. You are guilty of perverting justice. That’s injustice.

Now what’s really important to see, though, is *inside* the church, what he’s talking about are not illegalities. If you want to get an idea of what James is saying, what kind of community we’re supposed to be, there’s a great example of it in Acts chapter 6. People read it and often don’t realize this is what it’s a picture of, a community of justice.

There were two cultural groups in the early church in Jerusalem. There were the Hellenistic Jews – the Greek speaking Jews - and the Hebrew-speaking Jews. But the differences went much deeper than language. If you speak Greek words, you will think Greek thoughts. It’s your heart language. And, for example, Hellenistic Jews tended to be more cosmopolitan in their sensibilities, as it were. They were something of a different culture than the Hebrew-speaking Jews.

And when you put two competing cultural sensibilities in the same church, that can be a little grating. Especially in one regard. There was something called “the daily distribution.” The daily distribution was a common fund Christians gave to, out of which members of the church who did not have an income were supported - especially widows.

But Acts 6 tells us the Greek-speaking Jews were complaining because they said *their* widows were getting shortchanged. And they brought their complaint to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, the apostles (which included James by the way so he was first-hand acquainted with this dust up). So what do the apostles do? Well, in Acts 6 it tells us they appointed a whole new class of leaders over the daily distribution. But what you can't tell, necessarily, when you read it through in English, is that *all* of the people who were appointed had Greek names, whereas the apostles all had Hebrew names. And here's what the apostles were doing.

They certainly knew this wasn't a kind of overt thing. It wasn't like the Hebrew Jews were sitting around saying, "What can we do to shortchange those Greek widows?" No. That's not how these kinds of cultural clashes happen in a church. There are always different perceptions. There are claims and counterclaims and complaints, and both sides, very often, feel put-upon. But do you know what the apostles did? They empowered a disempowered group. They said, "We must take pains to make sure all groups are treated with equity here."

And so what they did was raise up a group of leaders out of a particular cultural group that was really not being very well represented.

So they created advocates for their people. It takes ingenuity, it takes creativity, to be a community of justice inside the Christian community, but we are to take pains to be that. That's what James is saying; we must be a community of justice.

Secondly, we're to be a community of mercy. Near the end of the passage, it says in v. 13, "...*judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful.*" Now what is that? Boy, James is being really strong. "You must be a merciful people. In fact, you'll be *judged* if you're not a merciful person." What does that mean? When you and I hear the word "mercy" in English, we usually think a very general thing. It means being nice. It means being kind. It means being forgiving.

And in the New Testament the word mercy could have that general sense, but it can also have a more specific sense. There's a place in the Gospels where Jesus was walking along and two blind men cried out, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" they weren't saying, "Jesus, be nice to us." They also weren't asking, "Please forgive us our sins." They were saying, "We have a physical need. We're *blind*, and we hear you can do miraculous medical intervention. We have a material need, and we want you to address it."

The word “mercy” also, by the way, at the end of the good Samaritan parable...The Good Samaritan - who stops to help the man who has been assaulted - meets *physical* needs, material needs, economic needs. He’s called, in that parable, “the one who did mercy.” And therefore, we have to ask ourselves - Okay, class - What’s the context here? When James says, “You’re going to be judged if you’re not merciful as a congregation...”?

Is he talking in the general sense of being kind and forgiving, or is he talking in the more specific sense? Well, we know, because look at **v. 15-16**. “*Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his **physicals** needs, what good is it?*” There it is. Do you see how strong this is?

By the way, what SWFF does outside the congregation is this very thing. This is Back-to School-Bash, this is gifts at Christmas, this is funding Convoy of Hope’s orphanage feeding programs, this is H-E-B gift cards for people in a tight spot. All of our benevolence ministries. Now you see how important it is, because James has the audacity to say – on behalf of God - “Judgment will be without mercy for those who have shown no mercy.” And he is using the word “mercy” both in its general and in its specific sense, in the same sentence, for *impact*. And here’s what the impact is.

It is saying God will judge us as a congregation if we just talk about love, and we don’t put our *money* where our mouth is, and we don’t put our *bodies* where our mouth is, and actually help people address practical needs, inside the church and outside. If you don’t care about the poor, God will judge you; that’s what it’s saying. “Judgment will be without mercy for those who have shown no mercy.” Pretty strong stuff, but there it is. We are to be a community *sensitive* to, radically *committed* to, justice and mercy.

Now we’re not going to go any further with that. There’s a lot more we could say about, “Well, what does that look like?” but we’ve got to move on. And the reason we have to move on is even though James is practical, he is not a pragmatist. By that I mean he never says, “Just do it because I said so. I’m a big shot apostle. Just do it.” He doesn’t do that. He gives you theological reasons. He says, “This is the nature of God. This is the nature of spiritual reality. This is the nature of salvation.” He gives you profound motivations and theological reasons to make us a community of justice and mercy.

And we need to look at those things, because it won’t be enough for me to just say, “I’m your pastor. Now just *do* it,” or for James to say, “I’m an apostle. Just *do* it.” *Why* are we supposed to be like this? *How* can we become like this? Let’s keep going.

Point two; Why we should become a community like this. Look again at v.1. “*My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.*” “... as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus ...” What’s that? In the Greek, the word “glory” there comes *after* Jesus, and a literal translation would read, “Jesus is the Lord of glory.”

Now the word “glory” in the Bible doesn’t just mean brightness or something. The glorious is the important, the significant, the weighty. To say Jesus is the Lord *of* glory is to say that he, and what he wants and your relationship with him, is the *supremely* important thing. But now see, he’s connecting this with the rest of the chapter. He says if you understand the *glory* of God and the glory of Jesus Christ, you will be people of justice and mercy. How is that?

In fact, what he does in verses 1–4 is he says, “If you treat poor people, if you treat a person who comes in and who smells bad...” We’ll get back to that. “If you don’t treat people of certain social groups or certain groups as equals, if you don’t see every human being as infinitely valuable and of great dignity and worth, you don’t understand glory.”

Now why would he say that? Or, *how* could he say that? I mean, how does the belief and understanding of the glory of God lead to a life of justice and mercy? It’s in chapter 3 that James actually gives us the entirety of his theological thought here. We’ll get to this in a couple of weeks, but in **James 3:9**, he says something amazing. He says, “*With the tongue...*” - with our words - “*we praise our Lord and Father and with the tongue we curse those who **have been made in God’s likeness.***”

He’s harkening back to Genesis 1, 2, and 3, because Genesis says every human being is made in the *image* of the glory of God. And that truth sets our ethical behavior. So Genesis 9 says you shouldn’t murder. Why? You shouldn’t murder human beings because they’re made in the image of God. They’re precious. They’re infinitely valuable. They have God’s glory in them, in a way. So you mustn’t murder.

Well, James in 3:9 he expands this. He says it’s not just that because every human being is in the image of God you shouldn’t *murder* anybody; he says you shouldn’t *insult* anybody. We’ll get back to that. That’s what curse with the tongue means. You shouldn’t even insult people.

If you insult anybody, if you treat the poor man as if he's somehow less important - "Oh, go sit over there" - you demonstrate that you do not understand that every human being is made in the image of God. Do you have any idea how important this is? Not just in church, but in the world. In Western civilization, this idea that every human being has rights - no matter how old or young, no matter how healthy or weak, no matter how rich or poor, no matter what racial group, what ethnic group, what cultural group - *every* human being has rights, and no one can violate them. Does that sound like common sense to you?

It's *not*. It is the driving tenet of our age, but it is not common sense. You say, "Well, *everybody* believes that." Well, maybe a *lot* of people believe that now, but it's not common sense at all; it's a new development in human thought. For example, Aristotle - there's a guy who is smarter than anybody in this room - and Aristotle said when you look at some groups of people you can just tell they're born to be slaves. That's Aristotle. He didn't see universal human rights as common sense.

Or just go to Wal-Mart, or drive around on Mopac for a while; do you come back saying, "Oh, it's just so obvious that everybody is of infinite dignity and worth"? No. What Aristotle says is when you just go around in life, there are all kinds of people you say, "Sheesh, you can't trust *those* people. Oh my goodness, those people...what disasters!"

It is *not* common sense to say every single human being, no matter who they are, that they all have rights. So where did this idea come from? Tom Holland – who is not a Christian, but recognizes the influence it has had on Western civilization - writes about what both the 18th century American and French revolutionaries – one very religious and the other very *not* – believed about human rights.

"These, so it was claimed by revolutionaries on both sides of the Atlantic, existed naturally within the fabric of things, and have always done so, transcending time and space. Yet this, of course, was quite as fantastical a belief as anything to be found in the Bible. The evolution of the concept of human rights...derived, not from ancient Greece or Rome, but from the period of history, condemned by all right, thinking revolutionaries as a lost millennium, in which any hint of enlightenment had at once been stuffed out by monkish book burning fanatics. It was an inheritance from the canon lawyers of the Middle Ages." (*Dominion*, 385)

In other words, the idea that "all men are created equal with inalienable rights" didn't come from Thomas Jefferson, but from mediaeval catholic monks meditating and reflecting on what the Bible says are the implications of every human being in the image of God. They were thinking, "Well, what are the implications of that?" and they came up with the idea of universal human rights, and until they did, that idea was not common sense.

And so Martin Luther King Jr. gives you an example of this. Where did the Reverend Doctor King get his inspiration for the civilian rights movement? In one of his sermons, “*The American Dream*,” he says, “You see, the founding fathers were really influenced by the Bible. The whole concept of the *imago Dei* ... ‘the image of God,’ is the idea that all men have something within them that God injected, [an ability] to have fellowship with God. And this gives him a uniqueness, worth, and dignity. And we must never forget this as a nation: **there are no gradations in the image of God.** Every man from a treble white to a bass black is significant on God’s keyboard, precisely because every man is made in the image of God.”

Now do you see MLK. saying, “Well, the reason you have to respect the rights of every human being is because it’s just common sense”? Is that what he says, “Everybody just knows that”? No. He’s doing theology. He’s saying the reason why we know this is because human beings are made in the image of God. All throughout history...

Where did the idea of hospitals comes from? There is no precedent of hospitals in the pagan world. This institution that we all take for granted was a completely Christian invention. In Rome, Christian noblewoman Saint Fabiola, who died in 399AD, established the first public hospital in Western Europe

and, despite her wealth and position, she ventured into the streets to personally seek out those who needed care. During the Middle Ages, the Benedictines alone were responsible for more than two thousand hospitals in Western Europe.

And not only did these hospitals provide medical care, but food for the hungry, home for widows and orphans, and they distributed alms and money to all who came in need. This was unheard of. The idea of hospitals that anybody who was sick could go to was a *unique* and crazy idea which Christians came up with. So many of our western ideals of morality came to us from Christianity.

The theologian David Bentley Hart wrote in a book about atheism, “We should never forget where those larger notions of the moral good, to which even atheists can feel a devotion, come from; and this is no small matter. Compassion, pity, and charity, are not objects like we find in nature, like trees or butterflies or academic philosophers, but are historically contingent conventions of belief and practice...that are the inheritors of a social conscience whose ethical grammar would have been very different **had it not been shaped by Christianity’s moral premise.**” (*Atheist Delusions*, 16)

Now, here's the million dollar question in our culture. People have been wrestling with it for at least 50 years. In Europe and America, Western civilization, the cultural institutions have said, "We're no longer based on the Bible. We're no longer based on a belief in God. As far as we know, there *isn't* a God; or, we don't know if there's a God. As best we can tell, human beings are here by accident. We weren't created. We could not say we're in the 'image of God', but we still want universal human benevolence. We still want the idea of universal human rights."

And so the big question is – I mean secular philosophers are wrestling with this - How can you maintain the ethic of compassion and universal human rights, when the soil out of which it grew, the belief in the image of God, is gone? Is it possible to keep it going? I hope so. I really hope so, and I mean that.

But there's another guy who was also smarter than all of us in this room, Friedrich Nietzsche, who probably knew better. And David Bentley Hart in that same book says, "The greatest [skeptic of Christianity] of them all, Friedrich Nietzsche...had enough of a sense of the past to understand the cultural crisis that the fading of Christian faith would bring about. Moreover, he had the good manners to despise Christianity, in large part, for what it actually was – above all for its devotion to an ethic of compassion..."

"He may have hated Christians for their hypocrisy, but he hated Christianity itself principally on account of its enfeebling solicitude for the weak, the outcast, the infirm, and the diseased...He never deluded himself that humanity could do away with Christian faith while simply retaining Christian morality in some diluted form, such as liberal social conscience or innate human sympathy." (6)

So I really hope that when our society - as it has - gets rid of the foundation for the ethic of human rights and universal human benevolence and compassion, that the thing out of which it grew it rejects, and it's still going to hold onto that morality. I hope it can. Nietzsche didn't think so, and he's smarter than me.

But here's one thing I'll tell you, O Christian community. Will not God judge us if we are *less* compassionate, *less* merciful, and *less* just than the society around us that doesn't even believe in the image of God anymore!? Will God not judge us if we are *less* merciful and *less* just than the people out there who don't believe in the image of God, which is the soil out of which the whole idea of justice and human rights came? Won't God judge us? The answer is yeah, He will. That's what it says here.

“Judgment will be without mercy for those who have shown no mercy.” Kind of a strong passage, isn’t it? But we’re not quite done, because now we have to say, “All right. Well, *how* do we get there?” It’s not enough for James just to get up there and say, “Do you believe in the image of God? Well, you’re going to be just and merciful. Right?” Because the answer is “Well, we do...but we’re not.” Why not?

Third and final point: How we can become that kind of community? And here are three quick ways we can become a community of justice and mercy...identity, poverty, beauty. First, identity. Do you remember the place, in verse 7 where he says you have “a noble name”? That’s Christian identity. No matter how poor you are, no matter how destitute you are - if you marry into, or are adopted into, a wealthy, prominent family - it changes your status like *that*. And when you become a Christian, you’re baptized into the noble name, the ultimate name...the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.

Now when James says in order to create a community of justice and mercy that we should look at our identity, this is the second time he does that. The first time was in chapter one. And if you were here a couple of weeks ago, we read this, but I didn’t bring it up. I ignored it because I wanted to bring it up this week. But in **James 1:9-10** he makes the most interesting paradoxical statement. “*The brother in humble circumstances...*” – that means poor - “*...ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position...*”

What is that? It’s wonderful. And here’s why. If you believe you’re saved by your good works, then either you say, “Well, if you’re a good person, God loves you, and He’s blessing you,” or, “If you’re a bad person, God rejects you.” So in that framework, you’re either a good person or a bad person; you’re either high in your position or low. But the minute you become a Christian, if you believe the gospel...

The gospel is this...in yourself you deserve nothing but rejection, but you can be saved and welcomed, not by your performance and your works, but by Jesus’ works. Which means the minute you say, “Father, accept me because of what Jesus did,” and God accepts you because Jesus lived the life you should have lived, and he died the death you should have died, because you *didn’t* live the life you should have lived, and he fulfilled all the requirements of salvation for you...

Then, the minute you become a Christian, at that minute, you have a low position *in yourself* - you deserve to be rejected - but you have a high position *in Christ*. Now here’s the wonderful little bit of psychology and social cultural analysis that James does. He says, “Look, the poor Christians are both low and high; they’re sinners saved by grace. Successful Christians, *you* are both low and high; you’re sinners saved by grace.”

But he says, “Poor Christians, who out in the world get nothing but disdain, it would spiritually benefit you to dwell on your high position, even though you’re still sinners, and yet, in Christ, you’re somebody. And you successful Christians, it would spiritually benefit you,” says James, “to dwell on your sinfulness and your low position, even though you’re adopted children.”

We say all the time around here that the gospel humbles you to the ground and lifts you to the heavens, at the same time. And that is very true. But in general – come on you know the way the world works – the poor most often need to be lifted up, and the rich most often need to be humbled. And when that happens, everybody meets in the middle. It takes away those identities that separate us. Now here’s the reason why this is so important.

A lot of us, this is where we are; let’s face it. If you live in Austin and you’re a Christian, you say, “Oh, of course, I believe Jesus died for me, and I believe in Christ, and I’m a Christian.” Yeah, you are, but here’s how your identity probably works. “I got into a good school. I got a good job. I own property in Austin! I’m living the life.”

You see, your *actual* self-esteem, your actual identity, is not based on your low position and so your high position in Christ - paradoxically - makes you *no* different than the humblest person. You feel pretty good about yourself because you’ve accomplished something, and therefore, you do not have a Christian-gospel-shaped identity. Even though you have gospel beliefs in your head, you don’t have an identity.

And as a result, you are a *detriment* to the creation of a community of justice and mercy. You’re going to come into a community like this and be a consumer. You’re not going to go after people who are very different from you and deliberately try to show the power of the gospel by creating a friendship between you. You’re going to network with people like yourself.

You’re going to network with other people who will help you get ahead in life, and you will actually be a drain on any ability to create a community of justice and mercy, because you don’t have a gospel-shaped identity. And to the degree you create a gospel-shaped identity, that degree will have a community of justice and mercy. That’s identity.

But then secondly, poverty. It's a powerful passage, isn't it? The second thing we have to realize is in **v. 5**, "*Has not God **chosen** the poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom?*" What is *that*? That is a simple fact. And the simple fact is, throughout history, in general, the people who have embraced the gospel have not been the well-off and the powerful, but the simple and the humble and the poor.

You can see it in Austin. You know the divides in this city – East and West. Historically West Austin is wealthy and East Austin is poor – I'm not telling you anything you don't know. Of course, in recent years, I wonder where the poor people in Austin *do* live. Getting priced out pretty quickly. But the distinctions are real and they affect everything from housing to schools to business amenities. Did you know the last two Blockbuster Video Stores in Austin were on the East side? Why? They didn't have hi-speed internet streaming in those neighborhoods. Or the neighbors couldn't afford it if they did.

But you know what else you will find on the East side? Churches. Lots of them. Not in West Austin. I defy you to drive up and down Mopac and count the churches – you can safely keep one hand on the wheel. But on Sunday mornings in Austin, churches are full in the East...and parks are full in the West. Think about this. I continually talk to secular, liberal people who say, "Oh, we care about the poor." And I always want to say, "Good, but the poor care about Jesus."

You go to the poor, and the poor have turned to Jesus; they love Jesus. And it is so paternalistic to say, "Well, yeah, I care about the poor, but of course, they're idiots, because they all believe in that born-again stuff and that blood-of-the-Lamb stuff." That is unbelievably discriminatory, and therefore, here's what I want you to see.

Why is it in general that the poor tend to turn to the gospel? Well, first, if you believe you're saved by works, that means you earn it. "If I live a good life, then God will bless me." That's being middle-class in spirit. Middle-class people say, "I don't want any handouts. I don't want any help. I can do it myself." That's middle-class in spirit. The gospel says the only way you'll ever be saved is if you throw yourself on the Bleeding Charity of God, because God's charity took the bleeding of Jesus.

See, when poor people hear that you have to admit that you are hopeless and that you have to be saved only by throwing yourself on the Bleeding Charity, they say, "Oh, I know how to do that." And when middle-class people hear, "You have to admit you're a hopeless sinner, a helpless sinner. You need to be born again, washed in the blood of the Lamb," they say, "That's offensive to me."

Yeah, because you're middle-class in spirit, and spiritually speaking, that means you're lost. You'll never ask for grace because you feel like, "I don't need really it. I'm not that bad." And as a result, in general, humanly speaking, the poor know and understand the gospel better than the well-off. We live in West Austin, so we'd better watch out.

So why do we talk about Bleeding Charity? Why does James end this passage by saying, "...faith without works is dead"? This is the bottom line, and this is the end of the sermon. "...faith without works ..." What are the works now? Do you see it, friends? It says if you have gospel faith but it doesn't result in works, then it's not gospel faith. It's not vital. It's not alive. Well, what are the works? The works are *mercy* and *justice*! That's what the whole chapter is about.

And the way we get them is through identity, poverty and – finally – beauty. At least our transformed understanding of beauty. And so James has the audacity to say, "If a poor man wearing shabby clothes ..." -and that word "shabby" means revolting, urine, feces, yuck. That's what it says - "If a poor man walks into your assembly and you say, 'Sit at my feet. Sit over there,' and you're not courteous and gracious and you have them sit next to you and you treat them as an equal, you don't understand the gospel." That's what he's saying.

Why not? Because...The gospel is *you* look like that to God. Your righteousness is as a filthy rag. You're revolting. If you have not gotten to that level of belief about your spiritual need, you're middle-class in spirit. And when somebody like that walks in that's that different from you, you're not going to treat them as an equal.

But that's not the only reason why gospel faith turns you into a person who is open-minded and reaches out to people, especially the poor. It's not just that you know that *you* are a poor man in God's eyes, that *you* look like that - you're revolting - but we know how Jesus saved us. *He* became a poor man. He was born in a manger.

Isaiah 52 and 53, those great servant songs say, "His physical image was so marred, he didn't even look human; he was so beaten to a pulp. He had no beauty that we should desire him. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities. By his wounds we're healed." *Jesus* became the leper. *Jesus* became the poor man. *He* became the revolting one, and he was cast out.

And you know that, *if* you know the gospel. And what that means is he was cast out...so you could smell like a rose. He lost his glory...so that you could have the noble name. He was judged...so you could have God's mercy. And if you know that, you're going to do justice and mercy, not because you have to, because you *want* to.

Have you seen the beauty of what Jesus Christ has done for you to save you? Do you see the beauty of what Jesus has done for you, so that you want to reflect it, so that you want to participate in it? Identify...poverty...beauty...then, we will become people who can build a community of justice and mercy in this city and in this world.

Let's pray...