

## Introduction

*Easter People Celebrate Particularity*

Check-in &amp; Introductions

## Epistle Lesson

James 2:1-10 (NRSVUE)

My brothers and sisters, do not claim the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory while showing partiality. <sup>2</sup>For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, <sup>3</sup>and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here in a good place, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit by my footstool," <sup>4</sup>have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup>Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor person. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into the courts? <sup>7</sup>Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

<sup>8</sup>If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. <sup>9</sup>But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. <sup>10</sup>For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

## Bible/Sermon Focus

Our current series, "Easter People, Let Us Sing!" is exploring what it looks like to live in community with one another, empowered by the energy of resurrection. The Body of Christ is one body with many members, and each member brings a set of particularities, qualities and characteristics that make an individual who they are.

Bringing these diverse sets of particularities together into one community is no small task! The Book of James asks us to confront the diversity that is inherent in the Body of Christ. Even in the very earliest church, there was diversity. From the very beginning of the Jesus movement, disciples came from different religious, economic, and ethnic backgrounds, to name just a few of the particular identities present.

As such, James is careful to exhort followers of Jesus to not show partiality for one member of the Body over another. It is crucial that we are able to make a distinction between diversity and partiality. James doesn't claim that we shouldn't have these differences, but rather that we shouldn't consider one as "better" than another. We are different from one another, says James, and we need to be aware of how our differences may impact the way we treat each other.

James tells us that the way to do that is to follow what he calls "the royal law" – "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Of course, it all comes down to love. Of course it does!

In this week's sermon, Pastor Winter drew a parallel between our own bodies and the Body of Christ. In a human body, the right leg and the left hand have very different particularities, very different agendas for their own "health." However, both are a part of the same body, even with their differences, and neither can say to the other, "You have to do it my way or you are not welcome here!"

The "royal law" that is central to the theology of James asks us to love our neighbors as ourselves. There are so many ways this simple, elegant idea can and should impact our sense of identity and our interactions with others. To love yourself, your own body, and then to see your neighbor with that same love ... to love them as if they were your very self ... what a beautiful thought that is!

In the same way, Christians are called to love our own Body, the Body of Christ, the church. And then to see the community around us with that same love, and love them as if they were our very self. That doesn't mean the church gets it right all the time; far from it. And yet, in spite of the woundedness of our Body, it is a good body.

And by the grace of God, this Body is being redeemed. Together we are working out our sanctification. Together we are getting better, becoming more and more the Body that God is calling us to be. Easter people, let us sing!

## Discussion Questions

1. How does loving yourself help you love others?
2. Do you love the church?
3. Have you witnessed certain particularities being privileged or prioritized over others? In the church? In other spaces?
4. Is your perception of the "health" of the Body of Christ ableist?
5. What can this congregation be doing better that would not only "welcome" others, but "celebrate" people for who they are?

## Prayer

Loving God, you have created us with unique particularities, given a diverse array of gifts, and called us to a variety of purposes. Thank you! Our Body is more beautiful for all its diversity. Give us grace to continue to be and build a community of Easter People, empowered by the energy of resurrection. Amen.

*"In this body of Christ, the right leg and the left hand sometimes have different agendas for what's best for the whole body."*