



Email: manseltonurc@gmail.com

Weekly letter – 8 September 2024

James 2:1-17

Pithy Comments

A few times recently a repeated post comes up on my Facebook feed: ‘I need someone to explain to me why it’s always “if you can’t pay rent, buy fewer lattes and avocado toasts” and not “if you can’t pay your employees a living wage, buy fewer yachts, rockets and spacecraft”.’ It’s a comment about inequality and the link between the choices that are possible for billionaire business owners and their employees. It goes back to 2017 when a wealthy Australian property developer, Tim Gurner, said “When I was trying to buy my first home, I wasn’t buying smashed avocado for \$19 and four coffees at \$4 each.” Seven years later the comment is still reverberating around the internet with added criticism of people like Bezos and Musk.

The book of James offers pithy comments with a longer pedigree, and we are still talking about them centuries later.

James reminds us of teaching that goes back to Jesus and beyond him to Leviticus: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ But James adds that to show partiality to the wealthy undermines this: ‘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?’

James reflects Jesus’ teaching that the Pharisees burden others with their expectations (Matt 23:4) and their tithing of dill and cummin is not as important as showing justice and mercy (Matt 23:23). James sums it up by saying, ‘mercy triumphs over judgement.’

James resonates with Jesus saying about helping others in practical ways, that ‘just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ James says it’s not enough to tell people to keep warm and well fed without meeting their needs, ‘So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.’

As a church, we have Christ Well Community Project to show God’s love to our neighbours, to show mercy and to put our faith into practice. Take a few moments to ask God to show you how you might add to that in your personal life.

Simon

**Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Delyth Higgins
Bible Readings: Genesis 2.4a-15: Romans 8.18-25.**

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Christ Well

Prayers for every household – we will pray for 38-70 Manor Road

Tuesday, 10th September – Tea and Chat – 2-4 pm

Future Dates for your Diary

Church Community Work Celebration Service - Saturday, 21st September at 2.00pm at UCS

An occasion to celebrate the church community work that has taken place over the last 10 years in URC churches & URC/Methodist LEP's in Swansea & Llanelli and the charity, Unity in Diversity. We will affirm the current projects and volunteers and pray for the plans for the final 5 years of the Church Community Work. The Service will be led by Rev Simon Walkling and Rev Louise Gough.

God's Chosen

(Lectionary readings: Proverbs 22.1-2, 8-9, 22-23 and Psalms 125: Isaiah 35.4-7a and James 2.1-10, (11-13), 14-17: Mark 7.24-37)

Dear God, I hate being asked about my favourite.

An ice-breaker or assessment, a way of getting to know me, it's beyond annoying now.

How daft to have a favourite colour, as though one could be right for everything, to have one meal I eat just because I like it best, or to choose among children or friends as though love can be measured like that.

Thank you for the wisdom that you have no favourites that we have in common that you made us all, rich or poor, whoever, wherever, and whatever. Thank you for Jesus, your beloved Son, who learned and lived out your will that he should reach beyond a chosen people, to bring your love to all your children, everywhere.

Thank you for those in the early church who challenge me about my acts of favouritism today.

Now I rejoice that your far reaching love is not bland or abstract just because it is universal, but deeper and more tangible than my best love. I feel your love for me and understand its depth and I need not be jealous that you love us all just as much. May I learn, from you, how to love like that.

Susan Durber (URC Prayer Handbook 2024)

