

## September 6, 2015 – Sermon Notes, Pastor Alan Smith

### “The Poor”

- The leadership in the City of Hagerstown is troubled by the increasing amount of poor that are in the city. They have talked about limiting the charitable institutions and agencies that serve the poor. They say it is those organizations that are attracting the poor to the city.
- The poor are increasing. There are at least 5000 on the housing assistance waiting list. The poor are in their situation sometimes because of their own choices and sometimes because of no fault of their own.
- Sometimes we judge the poor and think they are lazy. They don't want to work. In other words we have prejudices.
- If you have ever driven in downtown Hagerstown during the day and seen the people sitting on the steps or just walking around. Sometimes we think why aren't they working?
- Church is a place where everyone should be treated equally.
- It doesn't matter if we are rich or poor, tall or short, long time members or visitors. We are all equal in God's eyes.
- **John Wesley once dreamed that he was at the gates of hell. He knocked and asked, “Are there any Roman Catholics here?” “Yes, many,” was the reply. “Any Church of England men?” “Yes, many.” “Any Presbyterians?” “Yes, many.” “Any Wesleyans here?” “Yes, many.”**
- **Disappointed and dismayed, especially at the last reply, he turned his steps upward and found himself at the gates of paradise. Here he repeated the same questions: “Any Wesleyans here?” “No.” “Whom have you, then, here?” he asked in astonishment. “We do not know of any here which you have named. The only name of which we know anything here is “Christian.” ”**
- We could add to that list Brethren, Baptist, rich, poor, ETC.
- We are all God's children.
- How should we act? What does God honor?

- Before we look at our scripture we have to go back to the last verse in Chapter 1
- **James 1:27 Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.**
- In God's sight a pure and genuine religion is taking care of those that are in distress.
- Looking out for those that are in need is one of our top priorities as believers.
- This church has done a great deal in helping those that are helpless.
- We serve the men at the rescue mission. We feed people through our food bank. We help feed children through Micah's backpack. We have our emergency fund which helps those in financial need and this list goes on.
- It is easy to give money to the poor. What about welcoming them in to our church?
- Do we look at the poor differently? Do we judge them for how they live?
- **James 2:1 My dear brothers and sisters,\* how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?**
- How would we treat someone that just came of the Appalachian Trail? He/she may smell and have dirty clothes. They may not have their hair combed.
- Would we want them to sit next to us?
- We could take this and ask the question do we treat others differently because of their status in society or even in the church?
- All people are equal and should be treated equally.
- **Proverbs 14:31 (NLT) — 31 Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but helping the poor honors him.**
- **Proverbs 17:5 (NLT) — 5 Those who mock the poor insult their Maker; those who rejoice at the misfortune of others will be punished.**
- The poor should not be oppressed or mocked. They are God's children too.
- At Valor ministry there was a plea put out for a young mother that was homeless with her two children. She was working two jobs to support her family and needed over \$600 to be able to get an apartment for her family.

- There more stories that are similar.
- We would like to think that this doesn't happen in this great nation. We know it does.
- In my life I have learned that all people should be treated with respect. When I go to the prison I address the men as gentlemen. I look them in the eye and shake their hand. Some even get a man hug.
- **1 Peter 2:17 (NLT) — 17 Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king.**
- In the scriptures I just read we see that God shows no favoritism.
- **Acts 10:34–35 (NLT) — 34 Then Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. 35 In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.**
- **Romans 2:11 (NLT) — 11 For God does not show favoritism.**
- When we look at people that are different then ourselves we need to always remember how God would treat them.
- **James 2: 8 Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”\* 9 But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.**
- **Matthew 7:12 (NLT)**
- **12 “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.**
- We have been taught this all our lives. Even in the schools they teach this principle.
- So if someone came in here dirty, tattered clothes, messed up hair, how will we treat them?
- Imagine if you were that person. How would you like to be treated?
- When you answer that question then that is how we need to treat those less fortunate than our selves.
- One more example before I close.

- When Joni and I attended St. Paul's UMC in Smithsburg we had someone like that come to church. Now I would like to say we took him home gave him clean clothes, let him take a shower and fed him. We didn't but there was a couple in the church that did.
- That is the religion that God honors!