

James #3 - Rich Jesus, Poor Jesus

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- All right, Bible trivia time. You ready, Bible trivia time, you ready? You're not, all right, we'll do it anyways. All right, first question. We're gonna start with easy ones. Okay, we're in the book of James. You can go to Chapter One. James had a big brother, who was James big brother?

- [Congregation] Jesus.

- Jes, I gave you an easy one out of the shoot. First time visitor. non-Christians like, I'm gonna say Jesus. Good job, all right, you got the first one. It's gonna get a little tougher? Okay, Jesus and James, they're brothers. They got a mom and dad. Who's their mom and dad? Mary and Joseph, you guys did so good. Okay, now we're gonna get little more difficult. Okay, James and Jesus. Did they grow up rich or poor?

- [Congregation] Poor.

- Poor, all indications are they grew up poor. They grew up in a town called Nazareth, right? Really rural, little, poor, hick, middle of nowhere town, in that day, somebody in the Bible asked the question rhetorically. Can anything good come from Nazareth? It was that kind of town? Maybe you grew up in a town like that. Congratulations, you made it out. In addition, the other indicators that they report or what was his dad's job? What was James father's job? Carpenter, don't make a lot as a carpenter in a small town. And he had a big family. Lot of kids, probably a poor family. And it tells us, I think it is in Luke. When his family went to the temple in Jerusalem, they made the pilgrimage, they were gonna bring their sacrifice. If you were someone who could afford it, you would bring a certain kind of animal, a little more valuable. If you were poor, there was a provision in the law for you to bring a lesser sacrifice. They brought that sacrifice. They were not a rich family, they were a poor family. So James and Jesus grew up together poor. Here's the next question? A little more difficult. Should Christians be rich or should Christians be poor? Some of you went to college and you said yes, that was money well spent. That was money well spent. It's the wrong question, isn't it? That's a question that's economical or political but it's not biblical. If you ask the wrong questions, you head down the wrong road, and you end up in the wrong place. There's a lot of class warfare. There's a lot of rich versus poor. There's a lot of political infighting. And if you ask the question, should Christians be rich or poor? You're like, I don't know. That's not the right question. Here's the better question. Should Christians be

Godly or ungodly? You didn't say this enthusiastically as I would have hoped. It's pretty clear, right? Christian should be by the grace of God Godly, Godly. So it doesn't matter if you're rich or you're poor. The question is, how are you living your life, particularly in regards to your wealth? Is it Godly or ungodly? So what you're gonna meet today are two categories of people, the rich and the poor, they are going to appear in James, Chapter One, starting in verse nine. And they are going to appear repeatedly through the course of our study of the book of James. So I wanna introduce these categories today so that you're familiar with them through the remainder of our study in the ensuing weeks and months through the book of James. And so our sermon today is Jesus, of course, is the centerpiece, and it's rich Jesus and poor Jesus. And I wanna share with you the four kinds and categories of people that we see in the Bible. And the reason I wanna do this is today when we learn about the poor and the rich, those are two of the four categories in the Bible. Here are the four categories. Number one, the Godly poor. Can you think of people in the Bible, they're poor, but they're Godly? And can think of people like that in the Bible, actually there's a lot of them, right? We just looked at the fact that Jesus' family, they were Godly family, a devout mother and father, but they were a poor family. A lot of people in the Bible, they're Godly. They love the Lord, but they're poor. There's a widow in the Bible who gives a percentage of her income generously, but she was very poor. But the Bible commends her as being very Godly. Godliness regarding your wealth is, how do you get it? How do you invest it? How do you tithe that? How do you save it? How do you spend it? Category two, the Godly rich, can you think of anybody in the Bible or people in the Bible, they're rich but they're very Godly, the way they get it, the way they share it and spend it, and save it, and invest it. It's very noble. Can you think of anybody like that? There's a lot of people like that actually. Joseph is overseeing a tremendous amount of wealth in Egypt, right? Daniel has a lot of influence in Babylon and is in a prominent position. Man named Nehemiah, he raises a great amount of money to rebuild the entire city of Jerusalem. Abraham was a very affluent man. Job was rich and then he lost everything. And then he kinda got it all back. Joseph of Arimathea is a wealthy guy. And when Jesus dies, he gives Jesus his own tomb. There are some Godly people who are wealthy in the Bible. Category three, can you think of people in the Bible who are ungodly and poor? Proverbs talks a lot about these people. The sluggard, like the guy who literally won't work. The people who, they get their check and the first thing they do is run to the casino and they gamble away their money. They're not smart with it. People who chase get rich quick schemes, people who are involved in nefarious business dealings. And as a result, it doesn't go well for them. You need to be careful to think biblically and not just politically. Just because someone's poor doesn't mean they're Godly. And category four, the ungodly rich. And of course, we're very familiar with them, right? We're the nation that loves the story of Robinhood. That the rich guys are bad and the poor guys are good. And the truth is that there are some ungodly rich, and they're mentioned in the Bible. A lot of the political leaders like Pharaoh or Herod or Nebuchadnezzar. They're Godless people. They're not Godly people, but they're very powerful and rich people. Maybe the most legendary example is the guy who comes to Jesus, he's called the rich young ruler. And he basically asked Jesus, "How do I inherit eternal life?" And Jesus says, "Well, you can't love me and your money. "You gotta pick between the two." And the Bible says that he literally turned his back on Jesus and walked away because when it came down to his stuff or his Savior, he loved his stuff more than his Savior. He was ungodly and rich. Why do

I give you these categories? 'Cause I want you to figure out what category you're in. Are you Godly and poor? Are you Godly and rich? Are you ungodly and poor or are you ungodly and rich? And I don't want you to just to think, am I rich or poor? I want you to think, am I ungodly or Godly? And as we get into the book of James today, we're gonna be dealing primarily with categories one and four. We're going to be dealing with the Godly poor and the ungodly rich. And here's the last question for you. Jesus Christ, rich or poor? Which one's Jesus? What a timid crowd you are. What A timid. You're the worst sports fans ever, right? It's like we're in a library, very quiet. Okay, Jesus, how many of you think Jesus Christ poor? Okay, Jesus Christ rich? Okay, okay. Yes, okay, yes, yes. I'll read a verse to you. I have a verse, second Corinthians eight, nine. Here's what the apostle Paul says, "For you know "the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, "though he was rich," it says, "Yet for your sake, he became poor "so that you by his poverty might become rich." What he says is, "Jesus Christ has known riches and poverty." Therefore it's not simply riches or poverty. Jesus Christ is God. But he also acted of course, in a Godly way when he was rich and when he was poor. The big idea is, it doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, it matters if you're Godly or ungodly. So what he's saying is Jesus Christ was rich. So for Eternity pass, Jesus is ruling and reigning, King of Kings, Lord of Lords in his Heavenly kingdom. Rich, yeah, yes, yes. The picture of Heaven and God's Kingdom in Revelation told you before streets paved with gold, right? That's even, even rap moguls are like, that's amazing. I didn't even think of that. That's unbelievable. Okay, so rich and then he came down to earth and he was poor. He couldn't pay his taxes, had nowhere to lay his head. He was poor. Didn't have, didn't have the economic income to purchase a tomb to put his own body in after they murdered him. So Jesus on the Earth was poor. So it says he went from glory to humility, from riches to poverty. And so if you are poor, we want you to, by the grace of God, be poor like Jesus. And if you're rich, we want you by the grace of God to be rich, like Jesus. And it's less about rich and poor. And it's a lot more about Godliness and unGodliness. And it's always about Jesus. Well now he's going to talk firstly to category one and then secondly, to category four. So Jesus' bold little brother has this to say to the Godly poor, James one nine, "Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation." We learn a lot here. First of all, he's writing to Christians. He calls them brothers. Some of you ladies, maybe you're offended. They may say, well that there it is, sexist. Discriminatory book, all written by guys talking about guys and only refers to the brothers. Let me tell you that nothing could be further from the truth, that in that culture, it was the brother who had the legal position to represent the family, receive the inheritance. And by calling all of God's people to the position of brother, it is actually taking women and elevating their status to being equal to men, equal in the sight of God and equal to the inheritance. And so ladies, this is the Bible honoring you as they would have heard it 2000 years ago but he's talking to Christians, calls them brothers. So we're brothers and sisters. Jesus is our big brother as James' big brother is Jesus. So Jesus is our big brother spiritually. He comes to help and to seek and to save and to serve us. And through him, we get adopted into the family and God becomes our father. So he's talking about Christians and he says that they are lowly, lowly. You know, some religions, it's really about the rich and the affluent and the powerful. And the more money you give, the more access you have. In certain religions who actually buy your seats like you would for a sporting event. And the more you have, the closer you sit up front, the less you have, you stand up in the back. Some religions it's all about a caste system where, well, how

much do you make? And that's where you are on the, on the order of priority. Here God starts by talking to those who are lonely. Here's what, lowly, and what this means is they're poor. They're not rich. How many of you feel lowly? I put out the category of lowly. You don't have to raise your hand, but see, yeah, lowly. Here's what that feels like. I'm not rich. I'm poor. I'm not brilliant. I'm average. I'm a C student. I'm not beautiful. I'm pretty difficult. I'm not successful. I'm, I'm average. People don't ask my opinion. They don't want to be like me. People don't pay a lot of attention to me. They sort of overlook me. I'm lowly. This is, this is the identity that they have received from the culture around them. And the truth is the culture we live in today is not trending favorably toward Christians. And for the most part those who follow and love Jesus, they're seen as lowly. Not that smart, not that gifted, not that competent, not that capable, not that valuable, people can do a lot better than that. So off to the side you go and here's what's happened for them and it can happen for you. Their net worth has established their self-worth. You need to know there's a difference between your net worth and your self-worth. In their day, like Arta, if you make more, you're more valuable. Well, that may be true economically but that's not true emotionally. That's not true spiritually. That your net worth and your self-worth are not corollary. In fact, there's no one more valuable than Jesus. And while he was on the earth, he was poor. So how many of you are feeling that today? You feel like, yeah. I feel very typical. Very average, very normal, very regular. Not very special, lowly. Here's what he says. Boast, doesn't that sound weird. I'm a D student. I got fired. I was engaged, boast, boast. I mean they never do a parade for the losing team. Have you noticed that? Yeah, they never do a parade for the losing team. What, boast, get happy, celeb, but what? What is this? It's a paradox. It's a paradox. GK Chesterton, the great British writer, He says, "A paradox is truth, "standing on its head, shouting for attention." He says, "Here's something to be excited "about in his, in your, in our exaltation." You're like, but I'm not up there. I'm down here. God says boast because I see you up here and I'm bringing you up here. You're starting down there but you're gonna follow the Lord Jesus as the Lord Jesus has been exalted into Heaven. So you two will be exalted with the Lord Jesus in Heaven. That's how the Lord sees you. He sees you not where you are but where you will be when he's done with you. And that's to give you an identity along the way and an identity that's received from the Lord, not achieved by you. And I want to revisit briefly if I might. Some of the things that we hear in the book of Ephesians but he's really here getting to the issue of identity because in the eyes of the world, they're lowly. Some of you feel that way. And as a result, it's hard to boast and this is good boasting. This is not boasting in yourself. This is boasting in the Lord. This is not saying, here's what I've done. It's saying, here's what he's done for me. Any of you have a problem with boasting, the solution is boasting in the Lord. That's the corrective. And so what he's saying is that your identity cannot be received from the culture around you and the way that others see you. It has to be received from the Lord and how much he values you. Even if you can't afford anything, it's okay. Because when it comes to salvation on the cross, Jesus paid for everything. Aren't you glad you don't have to buy eternal life? Today you are lowly. But one day you'll be exalted with Jesus forever. The only rich and powerful person that may ever choose you is Jesus Christ. And his choice is truly the only one that really matters. Today you are poor but one day you will receive a rich inheritance from Jesus. And today you may not have any treasure, but you are rich if Jesus is your treasure, that's what he's saying. So they're seeing themselves through the world's eyes that their, their net worth

establishes their self-worth, that they're low lowly. And here through James, who's a pastor, and this is what a pastor is supposed to do. Take the word of God and present it to you so that you see yourselves through the eyes of God. And this is, this is God, the Father, through pastor James meeting with his kids and saying, I got kids. You're sad. You're bummed out. You're discouraged. You're depressed. You feel like you've been rejected and dejected. And you've got this trial going on which is where he begins in chapter one. And, and the trial is that you're poor and Godly. And you're looking at all the people who are rich and ungodly. And you're asking how come life works like this, right? I understand the people who are ungodly and poor, right? They made bad decisions and life is hard. I understand people who are Godly and rich, they're really generous and good tithers and givers and stewards. So God gives more to them. But how many of you find yourself in a similar predicament emotionally or say I love the Lord and life is hard and I'm a nobody. And I got nothing. And all the people who are somebody and got something, they use it to dishonor the Lord. How does that work? That doesn't seem fair. That doesn't seem right. How come I'm lowly? Why is it like this, you been there, today? And James says, "Let me explain how this works. "Boast in your exaltation, "see yourself as the Father sees you" I'll give you. And we all, we all, we all deal with this. If I asked you this question, I wish I was, fill in the blank. How would you fill it in? I wish I was beautiful. I wish I was smart. I wish I was funny. I wish I wish I was rich. I wish I was popular. I wish I was successful. I wish I was promoted. However, you would fill in that blank indicates the way in which you feel lowly. So what he does here, God's a Father and and James has the Father's heart. That's what a pastor should have. And it's literally like a dad. Who's got a daughter, I'll use, I've got daughters. And I love them with all my heart. I'll use them as a hypothetical analogy, an illustration. Let's say one of my daughters went to school and it was one of those days at school where the kids were picking on them, making fun of them, bullying them, criticizing them, discouraging. One of my girls, not beautiful enough, not smart enough, not successful enough, not popular enough, whatever the case may be. Let's say one of my girls came home, my daughters, and you could just tell, lowly, and literally lowly like their cadence, their gaze, it's low. Their shoulders are low, right? Their posture is low. They're just everything about them is just discouraged. As a father, this would be my opportunity to do ministry. And literally what a dad should do at that moment. Dad should get right down at the eye level of the daughter. What did they say? They said, "I'm ugly." You're not, they're lying. You're beautiful. They said, "I'm stupid." They're wrong. You're not, you're great. They said, "I'm not valuable." Oh, they're wrong. You're priceless. They don't want to be with me. Well, that's okay. I can't live without you. What a father's trying to do is take the spectacles that others have put in front of the eyes of the child, take them off, take his spectacles, put them on. I need you to see yourself. As I see you. I need you to see not just who you are but who you're becoming. I see you as a grown woman. I see you as a mature woman. I see you as a glorious woman and I need you to see yourself as I see you so that you can become who you really are. Do you understand that? This is where our identity is received from our Father. It's not achieved by us. Are our identities received by our Father? It is not achieved by others' perceptions of us. And here James is having a pastoral moment with his church. And I'm glad to have one with you to say, you're not lowly. You're exalted. You're not unimportant. You're important. You're not worthless. You're priceless. You're not somebody that he can live without. You're somebody who can't live without and immediately you'd say, but, but I'm not great. And I

would say, but your Father is, your Father is great. And your Father sees your eternity. And your Father's plan is to make you great, do you understand that? There's so much hope and encouragement there. It's not lying to someone and saying, oh, that's not true. You're tall, no, I'm short. It's, it's being honest about where someone is. It's about being honest about who someone is. And having hope for who they will become, When God is finished with them in exaltation. After the work of Jesus is fully completed and they're like him and with him together forever, boast in, boast in you're exaltation, right? If you belong to the Lord Jesus, the seed in the kingdom alongside of him is already reserved for you and fully guaranteed. And the Father sees where you're going and the Father is going to take your hand and walk with you. And he is going to help you and mature you and love you and grow you. And then one day he is going to call you forth from your grave and you will be absolutely perfect as he always intended. And between now and then, you need to see who you are becoming instead of who you've been and how he sees you instead of how others see you. If you do that, there's great joy. And then you can obey his decree, boast in your exaltation. And if somebody comes along and criticizes you can say, you know what? Praise be to God. My Father loves me. He's working on that. And in this life or the life to come, that's going to be totally different. I'm really excited that what you're saying will not always be true. And then he transitions to the ungodly rich. How many of you are poor? The question is, are you Godly? How many of you are rich, the question is are you Godly? Here's what he says to the ungodly rich. Let the rich boast. That's the context in accordance with chapter one verse nine, boasting is humiliation. How many of you don't boast in your humiliation? I got fired. I lost. It's, again, those who are humble will be exalted. Those who are exalted will be humbled. There's only two options. God's plan A is humility. God's plan B is humiliation. If you don't take plan A, you get plan B. Say, "Pastor Mark, how do you know that?" Experience, lots and lots and lots of experience. So God tells those who are lowly, be humble. Let God exalt you. He tells those who are arrogant, if you've exalted yourself, God will not just humble you, he will humiliate you, because like a flower of the grass you will pass away for the sun rises with it's scorching heat and withers the grass, it's flowers fall and it's beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. One great New Testament commentator translates that, great to say while he's still working on his business. Now, I believe he's talking here about a non-Christian, the scholars disagree. They're split 50/50. You could talk about it in community groups study it for yourself but he just told us that the poor were brothers. Here he doesn't say anything about brothers and there he talks about their eternal exaltation but here he talks about their eternal damnation. So I believe he's talking about the ungodly rich and in light of that what he's really getting at is the issue of identity. And you need to know that when it comes to riches, much of the reason that we treasure our treasure is because the identity we can purchase, right? You say, I'm not smart. I'm not powerful. I'm not popular. I'm not beautiful. If you get enough money, you can fix that, right? You could, you could pay to correct almost anything physically, socially speaking, not spiritually speaking. And then you can reestablish yourself and represent yourself with a new identity. So you're not lowly anymore. You're not one of those people over there, out there, down there. You're one of the people, in here, up here, right there. And this is why we treasure our treasure because of the identity it can provide. We can go from lowly to exalted, from nobody to somebody, from unpopular to popular, from unattractive to beautiful. From someone that no one knows that

everyone knows about. And it's an issue of glory. And we want to be in the center and we want to be in the seat that God sits in. And we want everybody to know who we are and what we do. It says the guy up front with a light on him who's feeling convicted, right about now. The sociologists will talk about conspicuous consumption. And this is where we buy things. Not because of their functionality, but because of the identity that they provide for us, I'll give you some examples. We do this with clothing. How you dress says who you are. I noticed this not long ago. I was in Soho district in New York and they got a couple of shops for old guys like me. And one of them was a suit store. High-end, really nice, custom made, tailored suit. You can go in and spend a whole bunch of loot. Get a really nice suit. Walk out, walk around. Everybody knows, boy there's business leader, power broker, Wall Street. Look at what, that says something. About far down the street, another guy's shop, for old guys my age. How do I know it's for old guys? Things are expensive. Anytime it's expensive, it's for an old guy, but this was an old punk rock club. And it was filled with like \$500 pairs of vintage Levi's. So it's like faux chic humility, kind of weird, but really expensive humility. I don't wear a suit. I wear \$500 jeans, more expensive than the suit. Anyways, in addition, old Levi's jacket, Sid Vicious T-shirts old Ramones T-shirts, you kids don't know who I'm talking about, but but old guys like me. Yeah, it feels pretty good. So, so you can go in there and actually to get an outfit at the punk rock store was more expensive than the suit store, but both of which were presenting an identity, right? One is I'm the man. The other is I'm down with the man, right? Those are the two men's fashion alternatives. We do this with our clothes, right ladies? Okay, moving on. We do this also with technology, right? 'Cause your technology that establishes your identity, how many of you feel lowly if the phone rings and you pull out a flip phone, a flip phone, just turn around, you're like, I don't want people to see me. I'm so ashamed because they have a smartphone. That means you have a, you have a dumb phone. Really, okay, now I had this experience not long ago. Our contract on our phones came up. So as a family, we got in the car and for those of us who have phones, we went to get new phones. We're driving in the car. One of my children who will rename remain nameless because this is a negative illustration. Said, "Hey dad, what kind of phone are you going to get?" I said, Hey, I'm going to get a new flip. I'm going to get a new, ah, flip phone. If I was more secure in Christ I probably would've got a flip phone. What I said was I'm gonna get an iPhone. And my child said something to the effect of, yeah, that's what all the old people get. Really, how come? I'm driving and we have not yet purchased your phone. You may want to rethink the timing. I prophesy a flip phone in your soon to be future. Right, like huh? So to defend myself, I said, well, you know, a lot of people love iPhones. And when a new iPhone comes up, they line up down the block. Yeah, the old people do line up around the block. Really, okay. It's true. right? 'Cause your technology says something about you. We do this as well with our vehicles. Right, do you drive a scooter? Is that cool or not cool? Depends on the scooter. Right, I drive a Vespa. Oh, you're cool. Why, I don't know. 'Cause we decided, like a committee got together and said that scooter's not cool. That scooter is cool. How about, do you drive a car? Now what kind of car? German car. Korean car. It's different. Hey, this is offensive, but true. And, and then it's like, do you have a two door or a four door? Because four door is not cool to. Two door, it's cool. Do you have a truck or an SUV, yeah? I can get have whole deer in there, whole deer and a table saw, that's good. Do you drive a minivan? Whoever marketed the minivan, if they were hoping to entice men, shouldn't have started with the word mini, just

throwing it out there as a marketing insight. Because if you're a man, you drive a minivan, you feel like a mini man. Right, I mean it's, right? So you guys are like, how am I now going to go out and get into my minivan to drive away? Now here's what I'm saying. The lonely will be exalted. Mr. Harley, you know, he'll be driving a minivan and the Kingdom of God, okay, and your minivan at the end of time, God will set it on fire, glory be to God. And you will enter into the eternal kingdom never to drive a minivan again forever. So this life is a short while, endure hardship the Bible says, and that's what you're doing. And we respect that. I'll talk about myself. It's this issue of identity that we want to spend money to set up an identity. So we're not considered lowly culturally. And I'll just be honest, since I've picked on everybody else. I'll pick on myself. I am at the age where, where there are some complex variables regarding my appearance. Can I say it like that? People ask, why do you wear boots? I've always worn boots. My dad wore boots. My grandpa wore boots and an boots make taller. I'm short. This stage is 57 feet high. I am short and I wear boots, in part just to be honest with you. 'Cause I'm not that tall. People always come up to me, they see me on video. Oh, Pastor Mark, I always wanted to meet you. I thought you would be taller. My answer is, I always wanted to be you. I thought you'd be nicer. You know, Pastor Mark, why do you wear vests? 'Cause I have a bit of a gut. I wish I had a six pack, but I have a cooler. And what I find is that if I tuck my shirt in, it sort of does things that I'm not pleased with. And then if I put a jacket on I'm left with a horrible dilemma, do I just wear the jacket and stick my gut out there? Or do I close the jacket? That everybody knows what I'm doing? And it looks ridiculous. So I bought a vest, okay? And then, and then, and then I used to have a lot of hair and now I have less hair here. I still have the same amount of hair. It's just relocated without permission. Okay. I don't. And how many men are, you're understanding this? You're feeling my pain. Okay, and all of a sudden, now my hair has gotten what color? Sort of gray, pretty white. Like I went from young guy to Santa in like 15 minutes. I don't know what happened. So we were like, I'm going gray. I'm going white. I'm going white. And so then you reach a point where men, you reach a point where you're like, okay, I am seen as lonely, lowly, lowly and old and not very cool and not very hip. Not that I ever was, but less so. So then the question is, men, what's the question then? Do I dye my hair? Okay, so we'll vote on this. We're gonna have a little congregational Baptist meeting here. Vote yes, dye my hair? How about orange? Okay, no. So, you're with this dilemma so then you're at the slumber. You're like maybe if I dye my hair, I'll look younger, maybe. But then the problem is my, my beard, my beard. It's a Kenny Rogers and Santa got together and made my beard. So I have this really, my beard comes in really like sort of Gandalf white. And so, so then the question is, well, if I dye my hair and I don't dye my beard, don't I look crazy? Yeah, 'cause it's like the top, like like the Northern hemisphere, he's 30, in the Southern hemisphere, he's that guy's grandpa. So you look kind of crazy. So then you got to, so then you got two choices. You shave your beard, but I get another one in 17 minutes. I've timed it. I grow a beard in 17 min. My dad's a Wookiee. My mom's a Chia pet. And I grow a beard in 17 minutes, okay. I'm just letting you in on my life. And, and so, and so, and I could tell you this 'cause like it used to be I'd preach all day and I preached the morning and then I preached the afternoon and then I preached the evening. I asked the video guys, well the part of the first message was good. And the part of the second message was good. Can we splice them together? They're like, we can't because in the first sermon you don't have a beard. And then the last sermon you do, I'm not even kidding. So then the question

becomes, okay, I can't clean shave because then I'd have to just literally walk around shaving all the time to preserve the illusion that I'm young. So then the question is, do you dye your, your beard? Do you, if okay. If you're a guy who can do dye your beard, I admit this is a bad day for you, but I just, I won't. I just think just 'cause what I would have is like a half dark beard and a half white beard and my wife's even laughing but you know what I'm going through okay. And here's the big idea. There are so many things in ways that all of us are made to feel lowly, lowly, and we struggle with, well how can I fix that and create an identity? Maybe if I had more resources I could reinvent myself and then I wouldn't be lowly. I'd be exalted. I'd not be one on the margins. I'd be one on the set. I'd be different. It'd be better for me. And that's where he's going with this issue. So he says, "Hey, if you're lowly, rejoice "and be glad that God's going to exalt you "and he sees you as he'll be done with you. "If you're exalted "and proud and full of yourself and all about you," he says, "It's a bit of a, a scathing rebuke." You can quote unquote boast. You want to brag, in your humiliation. He says, "It's like a flower. "And some people are like a flower." You ever seen a beautiful flower, straight, tall, alive, flourishing, glorious? You don't even want to pick it because it's so amazing. People are like that. Some people are amazing. We're looking more like, gosh, look at that. That's a, what a person, there's a real, there's a real special person. He says, "Well, you know what? "At the end of time, the heat comes, "the wind comes, and it scorches "and it torches and the flower's gone." Here's the big idea, always live with the end in mind. We're all like a quarter milk in the fridge. We all got an expiration date. We're all gonna die. It's all gonna come to an end. All that we have, all that we do, all that we are, it comes to an end and we stand before God. And so much of what we've done just burns. And, and I hope, and I trust and I pray that you don't burn. And he's inferring and referring here to eternal judgment, that for some of you, this life is as close as you'll ever get to Heaven and Hell awaits you. And for some of you this is as close to Hell as you'll ever get. And Heaven awaits you. So then he teaches us. He tells us, he trains us, in what the solution is, whether you're rich or poor, here's the key to being Godly. Do you want to be Godly? Here's the key to being Godly. God gives good gifts, James, one, 16 through 18, we're going to jump down. And then next week we're going to cover the section in the middle. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. There's your identity. It's going to say God's a father and your beloved. God loves you. God adores you. God is committed to you. God has affection for you. And some of you say, but I'm not special. He is, but I'm not good. He is, I don't deserve it. That's why it's grace. The Father loves you. You're his beloved, us corporately, absolutely. You individually, especially. When's the last time that somebody told you they really deeply, truly, passionately, committedly loved you? God does with a perfect never-ending love. Every good and perfect gift is from where? Good things don't come from the bottom up. They come from the top down, coming down from the Father. God's our Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will, just because he wanted to, just 'cause he's good. Just 'cause he loves us. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creation. He gives us a warning. Don't be deceived. You can be a Bible believing, spirit filled Jesus following Christian and still susceptible to deception. You can believe things that are not true. You can receive an identity that's not from the Lord. You can live in light of things that are not connected to God's reality. You say, well, I don't want to be deceived. None of us wants to be deceived. The Bible says, actually Paul says on a few occasions in the New

Testament, that the problem with our first mother Eve was, she was deceived. I don't want to be deceived. So how do I avoid deception? He says, "By the word of Truth." That the spiritual light he bursts innocent through us to get us around the opportunities for deception come from the word of truth, it comes from the word of God. If you want to avoid deception, you need to familiarize yourself with the truth. If you want to combat lies, you need to know the truth. And the truth is found, he says, "In the word of truth, the word of God." It's, and so friends, I just, every opportunity I get I wanna encourage you, read your Bible, study your Bible, pray over your Bible, memorize your Bible. Get in a community group, discuss your Bible. Spend time in God's word and get God's word into you. So when the enemy comes and lies to you and deception sets its face in front of you you're able to see it for what it is because Jesus says, "My sheep, hear my voice." And they, they know me. You say, that's not Jesus. I'm not going to go that direction. I'm not going to believe that instruction. He then tells us three things, that first of all God is our Father and he doesn't change. There's no variation or shadow due to change. See tomorrow, you and I will not be anxious. Will the stars be in the sky? They'll be there. So it is with the Father of lights. He'll be there. God does not change. And for us, that is good news. When he decides to love us, when he decides to seek us, when he decides to serve us, when he decides to save us, he doesn't change. He's a dad who doesn't walk out on his kids. Doesn't give up on his kids. He always loves and pursues and invest in his kids. And that's really good news. The God, the Father does not, will not, cannot, change. And in a world filled with so much change, the one thing that will never change is the Father heard of God toward his people. The second thing he says is, "That all good gifts "come from the Father." It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, the way you can live a life filled with joy and rejoicing and boasting in your exaltation is to acknowledge that everything that is in your hand came from his hand. I would beg you, spend time thinking about what you have more than what you don't have. More about what he has given than what you wish had already been given. One of the great deceptions is what I have is what I've earned. No, what I have is what he's granted. And this is all by grace, it's gifts. For those of us who are fathers, dads hear me in this. One of the ways we can practically functionally teach our children. The gospel is by being generous and good gift givers. My son Gideon, he, he came up to me recently with a candy bar and he looked at me and he said, "Dad, if I do my homework, can I eat the candy bar?? There's a, there's a gospel moment right there. I said, Gideon, just eat the candy bar. Eat the candy bar before you do your homework. He says, "What if I don't do my homework?? We had this long negotiation. I said, eat the candy bar. If I make you do your homework and then give you the candy bar, I'm teaching you to be religious and to do works, to earn gifts. If I give you the gift and tell you, I love you, I hope that that would compel your heart to do the right thing, not to earn my love. But as a result of the love I've freely given you, God is like that. God doesn't look at you and say, if you obey me, I will love you. Jesus says, if you love me, you'll obey me. It starts with God's love. It starts with God's grace. It starts with God's generosity and he gives gifts. You don't need to do anything to make God give you gifts. God is a God who loves to give gifts. And I would encourage you to be thinking, what are the gifts that he's given me? If everything that I have is a gift salvation, eternal life, the Holy Spirit, the saving power of Jesus, the scriptures. What gifts has he given you? And those are all gifts that he has given you because he loves you. And as you meditate on those things, you're able to have joy and to boast in your exaltation. And number three, the greatest

gift that God gives is people. All the gifts come down from above. Ultimately the greatest gift that comes down from above is Jesus. And the greatest gift that God gives his people, that's what he says, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creation. That concept of first fruits, it's really a mind blowing one in the Bible. It's the first, it's the best. So Proverbs says, "Give your first fruits to the Lord "your first and best." Right, Jesus has called the first fruits, right? His resurrection is the beginning of our eternal life. He's the first fruit, the first and the best. And, and, this is mind bending. I have not yet fully gotten my mind around this. I've studied it. I prayed about it. I've been working on it. I'm going to give it to you as far as I've got it. And I need you to take it from there. God sees you as his first fruits. He loves you. He sees you as first and best, and he sees you as a gift. Some of you would come to the Lord Jesus. He said, "I am lowly, I have, I don't have anything to give." And God is saying, "Give me you, give me you." And he said, "But I'm not in a good place." And God says, "I'm a father." "I take kids like you." "And I give them gifts and I help them." "And I change them." "So give me you, and I'll love you and I'll help you." "And I'll serve you and I'll change you." "And one day I'll exalt you "and you can be forever with me." At that point your mind should explode because there's no God or person like this. But that's how God is. That's how God is. And I want you to know that that the people in your life are a gift. You're a gift. You're the greatest gift that God has given, the greatest gift that God has given, other than of course God giving us himself, is giving us his people. And what this means is we receive gifts and particularly the gift of certain people in our life. We give glory to God and we give gratitude to them. And I want you to know that all good gifts come from the father's hand. And sometimes they come through hand of another and I want to do some course correction because occasionally religious people misunderstand this. When someone does or says, or gives something nice to them. And instead of saying, "Thank you, God bless you. "I appreciate you." They say, "Glory be to God." And they overlook the giver through whom God gave the gift. And sometimes even religious people have a hard time receiving a compliment. Thank you, well, all glory be to God. I know, I'm just trying to say thanks. And there's a difference between gratitude and glory. All the glory goes to God but gratitude can go to his faithful servant. I'm, I glorify God for the book of James and I'm grateful that James wrote it down. God brought us his word through his servant or giving an analogy. The greatest gift in my life are people, especially the ones with my last name, Grace and the kids. Recently Gideon had his eighth birthday and my quirky little line, I always say to Grace, when the kids are around or we visit somewhere, I walk up, put an arm around her. And I say, thanks for the people. Thanks for the people. See Jesus gave me these people through my wife, literally without my wife, we don't have these people. I want you to understand that God gives great gifts. He's a great Father. And sometimes he gives those gifts through brothers and sisters. And sometimes those gifts are brothers and sisters. And if you see your life in this way, you're a recipient of great gifts from a great God and that you're high and exalted, and he loves you. And he sees you in the completed, resurrected, exalted state in his kingdom, where you are like you were intended to be, and as he sees you, that's who you become. And between here and there, the Father lavishes gift upon gift, grace upon grace towards you. Then you're able to do exactly what he says. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation. This is who my God is. This is what my God does. This is where my God is taking me and everything I have comes from a Father who loves me, knows me, sees me, adores me, is aware of my imperfections but has overcome that with Jesus' perfection and is

bringing me eternally into his presence to be with, like, for, through, to Jesus forever. And the result is you can boast in your exaltation as you have an attitude of gratitude. And that's where he wants us to be. As God's people.