Recap of 8/25/24 message by Pastor Steve Plank (James 2:1-13 "The Royal Law"):

The fourth mark of a maturing faith that James hits us with is how we treat people. Do we look at their appearance or circumstances and then treat them according to the norms of our society or culture or do we treat everyone equally well because we see them as one who is made in the image of God and for whom Christ died?

James tells us simply that "believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism." (Jas 2:1, NIV) He goes on to give us two reasons why we are not to show favoritism (partiality, discrimination, make distinctions, be prejudicial). First it is morally wrong, it is sin (Jas 2:9). James' example is discriminating for the rich and against the poor, but the principle applies equally to any other discrimination. Partiality makes us unrighteous judges with evil motives, which are usually selfish in nature. The second reason (James applies it specifically to his example) is that it doesn't make sense; it is not logical. The rich oppress you, take advantage of you, and drag you into courts to grow or protect their wealth. Why would you treat them as special when they come into your assembly.

Fortunately, James gives us a sure-fire antidote to discrimination, what he calls the royal law; love your neighbor as yourself. Treat others as you treat yourself. See them as part of you and you will treat everyone with equal honesty, respect, and kindness. We can and should love others as ourselves because we love God, and the love of God is in us. James calls this living according to the law of liberty. We don't follow a checklist. Christ set us free from the law of sin and death. God's mercy (grace) toward us isn't based on our wealth, culture, education, gender, skin shade, job or anything else, i.e. it is offered to us completely impartially. We are called to show the same mercy (grace) to others. Being impartial ought to be a natural outflowing of God's life in us. Whenever we want to discriminate, we should pause, pray to ask God to show us our evil motive and through the power of the Holy Spirit, overcome that sin.