

God Loves You...

even if you think you are a nobody and you have nothing.



WEST SOUND COMMUNITY CHURCH

CHRISTMAS 2022

It can't be denied. You shouldn't even attempt to debate it. You'll lose every time if you argue there is no justification for the phrase "the haves and the have nots." You might have some solid footing if discussing the who, what, where, when, why, and even how regarding the phrase, but just slap a big nay nay on the idea of refuting it. It's not gonna happen.

In all circumstances—economics, education, status, popularity, ethnicity, nationality, politics, et cetera—we find the all too real presence of "the haves and have nots." It's true for everyone everyday everywhere regarding everything...except for God. He and he alone is the eternal, infinite all-in-all in which partiality finds no presence. You see, God is love, but love is not God. That's right. While the word love—the very essence, the pure meaning, the unadulterated core, essential, fundamental, intrinsic, elemental definition of love can be understood in light of God and God can be understood in light of true and perfect love, love is not God. Love is an extension, a characteristic of someone. When it comes from God, it's perfect...there are no "haves and have nots." When it comes from anything other than God, it's damaged...there are "haves and have nots." (cf. 1 John 4:9)

You and I, the folks we know, the folks we don't know yet, and the folks we will never meet will, one way or another, sooner or later, often or seldom, for better or worse experience this godless condition. It produces despair, depression, distrust, and disgust. If its impact blows upon us, we go breathless. If its impact blows upon another, we breathe a sigh of relief. Away from the heart of God, it's everywhere. In the heart of God, it's nowhere.

Do you know this all too well? How about the ones you love? Do they too relate far too well and far too often? What about neighbors, coworkers, even strangers? Does the existence of this problem produce a question or two? Like the atheists who love to ask, "If there's a loving God, why is there so much evil," is it possible you struggle, if not often, then maybe from time to time, with this fact: some have more while some have less"?

It's okay if you do. It's just not okay to hang on to it or, perhaps, hang from it. If questions like these express a need, then they certainly deserve an answer...and God has it. So, let's get busy. Let's see it in the clear black and white of the printed pages of the Bible. For example, read Leviticus 19:1-37. The whole chapter deals with fairness, justice, righteousness, and holiness. However, look especially at just two parts of this chapter. The first touches on fair and balanced treatment during court like disputes: verse fifteen.

Lev 19:15 You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

- In reference to court proceedings, everyone is to receive equitable treatment.



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God is love, but love is not God

The second one I'd like you to see is found in verses thirty-three and thirty-four

Lev 19:33, 34 *When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*

- In reference to those outside our own religion, ethnicity, and/or nationality, they too are to receive equitable treatment.

If Leviticus isn't cool enough for you, check this out from about 400 years later in the Book of Proverbs.

Pro 22:2 *The rich and the poor meet together; the LORD is the maker of them all.*

- In reference to all class boundaries, the LORD is the creator and keeper of all.

Things didn't change under the New Covenant. The Apostle Paul, in several of his writings referred to the level playing field at the foot of the cross. Notice Colossians 3:11...

Col 3:11 *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.*

- In reference to the new humanity, everyone who receives the Savior is among the "Haves."

Even the Pharisees had to admit that in Jesus "the haves and have nots" dilemma goes away. While trying to trick him—to tangle him up using his own words—they themselves stumbled as they spoke truth about Jesus. Turn to Matthew 22:15-22. Better yet, read the passage in context. However, to help us move along, check this out...

Mat 22:15-22 *Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.*

- In reference to the distinction between honorable human relationships and worshipping God, both the Pharisees by their silly bumbling and Jesus by his sovereign brilliance declared the truth of Leviticus 19:15, 33,34; Proverbs 22:22; and Colossians 3:11.

We could look at so many others. In fact, when you or you and others can get alone with God, take a look at all of the following. Always be sure to read up on the context.

Deuteronomy 1:17
2 Chronicles 19:6-7
Acts 10:34-36

Ephesians 5:17 — 6:19
1 Timothy 5:21
James 2:1-13



Application

It's one thing to see all this in propositional truth, it's another thing all the more wonderful when we see it in action. And of course the Bible gives us a lot of examples along these lines, but let's look at one that everyone relates to even if everyone cannot say, "Oh yes, been there, done that..."

She was like any other Jewish maiden. As she danced at the feet of her parents, like the other children she experienced both the wonder and bewilderment of being among the Chosen People. She was a Hebrew. She was born from the lines of Abraham and Sarah. She learned about the history...the history! The ups and the downs...the miracles and the mess ups...the victories and the defeats...freedom and the enslavements—all of the covenants and the riches of Yahweh and his living word belonged to her and her people.

And then the change came. She was becoming a woman...but the blood would not stop. Weeks. Months. Then they grew into years. One, two, three, four...12 long years.

She was unclean. Family, friends, and community, one and all considered her socially and ceremonially polluted. Her childhood dreams exploded...frightfully gobbled whole by the ugly world of adult expectation. Dr. Luke recorded it like this: *As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years...* (Luke 8:42,43)

The wonder gave way to wandering. Her dancing died. Her dirge came to life long before her old age. Twelve long years she wandered. She looked everywhere. Desperation pulled her. Distress pushed her. Desolation haunted her. "Doctor, please, I have some money can you help," she whispered over and over and over and over and over. All her livelihood, according to the gospels, spent just as uselessly as it had been earned. Here again is how Luke recorded it: *and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.* (Luke 8:43)

Earned. You can only wince and wrinkle your face as the horror of how she *earned* her livelihood begins to dawn upon your mind. How else would she make a living? She couldn't be near others—at least not others who mattered—or they too would be proclaimed unclean. She wouldn't marry...who would have her? There was only pain...

- ...the discomfort and pain meant for once a month was 365 x 12
- ...the stigma of not belonging kept her well beyond any meaningful interaction
- ...the isolation of shame and loneliness was a roaming prison.

She covered her coming and going under the shadows of late night hours. She walked back streets. When forced by necessity, she kept her shoulders bent forward, her head covered, and her face hidden as she ever so cautiously crept along the outskirts of crowds. The only people she "wanted" to see were "customers" and "doctors." She was a "have not." Hers was a "have not" slavery to the dark ways of a broken soul. Hope crushed. Expectations tainted. Her life was empty and meaningless. She clutched only tiny breaths of a whispering memory...messiah...savior...Emmanuel...

And then one day, one glorious day, skirting the edges of the jostling throng, while she could not yet see, she heard the murmurs. The words were too many. It was too hard to make out what was said. The voices mingled. Rushing waters, blustering wind...she could not make out why everyone seemed so alive! She quivered. She slowed her pace. She forced herself to hear. She even prayed. Then she quivered...



“Messiah.”

“Savior.”

“Emmanuel.”

“Could it be? Could it! Is that what I’m hearing? Or is it just another of my longings lingering to knock me down all over again,” she agonizingly thought to herself.

Then. Yes. She heard those words.

“Messiah!”

“Savior!”

“Emmanuel!”

She straightened her shoulders. Pulled back her hood. Stood upon her toes. Her eyes filled with hope. Her heart jumped. She froze breathless. And she whispered aloud, not a memory, but a prayer, *“If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.”* (Matthew 9:21)

She did. She was.

She was not a “have not.” She was...she always was the Lord’s daughter. The enemy and the fall of Adam reaped a terrible price upon her...

...but the Lord knew

...and the Lord had a plan

...and he longed for her to know

...for her to know she was a “have”

...she belonged

...she was loved...is loved...shall ever be loved.

God loved her even if she thought she was a nobody and had nothing!

Matthew reported it like this, *Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well.* (Matthew 9:22)

Merry Christmas

*for this is the message of the Trinity,
God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, “I love you
even if you think you are a nobody and you
think you have nothing.”*

