

Perspectives on the Poor

Please read through these ancient sayings and think on their application for today.

1. What does true spirituality look like, and what are its benefits?

"This is the kind of fast day I'm after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. What I'm interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families. Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once. Your righteousness will pave your way. The GOD of glory will secure your passage. Then when you pray, GOD will answer. You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.' 'If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins,' -- Isaiah 58

2. What was the king's wrong doing? What does it mean to know God?

"Who says, 'I'll build me an elaborate mansion with spacious rooms and fancy windows. I'll bring in rare and expensive woods and the latest in interior decor.' So, that makes you a king--living in a fancy palace? Your father got along just fine, didn't he? He did what was right and treated people fairly, And things went well with him. He stuck up for the down-and-out, And things went well for Judah. Isn't this what it means to know me?" --Jeremiah 22

3. What was this city's wrong doing?

As sure as I am the living God!--Decree of GOD, the Master--your sister Sodom and her daughters never even came close to what you and your daughters have done. "The sin of your sister Sodom was this: She lived with her daughters in the lap of luxury--proud, gluttonous, and lazy. They ignored the oppressed and the

poor. They put on airs and lived obscene lives. And you know what happened: I did away with them. --Ezekiel 16

4. List the benefits for those who help the poor and the consequences for those who don't:

- “Dignify those who are down on their luck; you'll feel good--that's what GOD does. GOD looks after us all, makes us robust with life-- Lucky to be in the land, we're free from enemy worries. Whenever we're sick and in bed, GOD becomes our nurse, nurses us back to health.” --Psalm 41

- “You insult your Maker when you exploit the powerless; when you're kind to the poor, you honor God.” Proverbs 14

- “Mercy to the needy is a loan to GOD, and GOD pays back those loans in full.” Proverbs 19

- “If you stop your ears to the cries of the poor, your cries will go unheard, unanswered” Proverbs 21

- “Be generous to the poor--you'll never go hungry; shut your eyes to their needs, and run a gauntlet of curses.” Proverbs 28

5. What is genuine religion? How might this relate to our city?

“Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.” -- James

6. How does the King identify with the poor in this scripture?

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why: I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then those sheep are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?’ Then the King will say, ‘I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me--you did it to me.’” Matthew 25

7. What are the reasons given for why we should work?

“With these bare hands I took care of my own basic needs and those who worked with me. In everything I've done, I have demonstrated to you how necessary it is to work on behalf of the weak and not exploit them. You'll not likely go wrong here if you keep remembering that our Master said, ‘You're far happier giving than getting.’ Did you used to make ends meet by stealing? Well, no more! Get an honest job so that you can help others who can't work.” Dr. Luke & Paul

8. How might this admonition be applicable for our service to the poor?

Don't you remember the rule we had when we lived with you? "If you don't work, you don't eat." And now we're getting reports that a bunch of lazy good-for-nothings are taking advantage of you. This must not be tolerated. We command them to get to work immediately--no excuses, no arguments--and earn their own keep. -Paul

7. List some of the negative reasons for why *some* people are poor:

“Sloth makes you poor; diligence brings wealth. You're addicted to thrills? What an empty life! The pursuit of pleasure is never satisfied.”--Proverbs 10 & 21

8. What is our primary objective for serving the poor and needy?

God's Spirit is on me; he's chosen me to preach the Message of good news to the poor, sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the burdened and battered free, to announce, "This is God's year to act!"
--Dr. Luke
