



Devotional Thoughts :: Blessed Are the Poor

Blessed Are the Poor - posted by SteveHale (), on: 2015/2/26 20:24

Blessed Are the Poor

Matthew 5:3

No doubt what the Master admires and loves in the poor is not so much their poverty as that they hunger and thirst for a new world more often and more acutely than do the rich. Their hearts, unfilled with earthly treasures, seem to him more disposed to receive the new life. And that is why he has for them such gracious words. That is why he too made himself poor, without even a roof to shelter him.

You have heard the story of Francis, that little man of Assisi, who felt that it was necessary to be poor to serve the Master well, and not to be diverted from him. His complete destitution made him so free and so gay that he seemed to be living in Paradise.

It is true that this "poverty" of the Master and of his disciple Francis does not belong to all the poor, especially not to those made poor by modern misery. One sees them more often revolted and embittered than joyous and liberated. It would be horribly cynical to leave them to their unfortunate lot, saying: "Blessed are the poor!"

It is of you that the Master, wanting to enrich you, asks the acceptance of poverty. You cannot preserve your comforts and still be "poor in spirit." St. Francis could not. He could not bear to be satisfied while some men were hungry, nor could he stand that any other treasure should compete with the one in his heart. He knew how to leave all for the sake of possessing the Kingdom of Heaven.

Philippe Vernier

Re: Blessed Are the Poor - posted by Jeremy221, on: 2015/2/27 10:30

James 2:5 KJV

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

I believe that the poor's reliance for their daily bread, crying daily is a reference that adds dimension to this passage.

Re: - posted by SteveHale (), on: 2015/2/27 15:20

Respect Poverty

In prison, I come to the lowest level of poverty. I possess nothing, which makes me look in a new light at this verse: "Do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor oppress the afflicted at the gate" (Proverbs 22:22).

Do not rob the poor of his only wealth, that precious jewel, poverty itself St. Francis of Assisi spoke about *sorella poverta*, sister poverty. Ascetics and saints of all ages have abandoned earthly joys for this valuable friend. Moses preferred the poor life of a pastor to being grandson of Pharaoh. Christ, possessor of heaven, chose birth in a stable, life as a carpenter among oppressed people, and death among thieves on a cross. He said, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20).

By what right do I take away the source of a man's blessedness? If I deprive him of poverty, I may deprive him of the kingdom of heaven. Imagine how it would have been had the rich man of the parable (Luke 16:19-31) been what is usually called goodhearted and divided with poor Lazarus his purple robes and fine linen, and invited him to dine sumptuously with him every day. He would have called Lazarus into future hell.

Poverty of the soul is the entryway to the kingdom of heaven. The ugly embryonic stage when we look like frogs is the prologue to manhood. Destroy a caterpillar because it is a repugnant worm and you will have destroyed the future butterfly. Taking away a man's poverty, we take from him the source of eternal happiness.

But must we not help the poor? We surely must—by sharing his poverty, by demonstrating our regard for his high estate. Mother Theresa of Calcutta set an example. By our sharing the experience of his poverty, a poor man is given the sense of his dignity before God and other men, whereas a few pennies thrown to him degrade him.

We commonly confound the unpleasant with the bad. Poverty is unpleasant, but it is a Christian's trial of love. What girl is not seduced into admiring a handsome boy who offers her rings and bracelets and cars and castles? Would she choose to live with that same young man in a humble cottage? It was easy for Job to love God with his family and cattle and gold secure. But what was the nature of his love? A trial had to be made in order to strengthen Job's faith.

Before I went to prison, my own social and material situation was very comfortable. In moments of self-examination, I asked myself whether I really loved God or loved rather the many outward and inner gifts with which He had endowed me. Then, in solitary confinement, hungry, trembling for cold, without even shoes—then I could really check whether I loved God or His gifts. How I rejoice to discover that songs of praise flew from my lips under those circumstances! My faith had been tried.

Christians do not fear hunger and would not readily rob the poor man of this experience. For Jesus says even to the rich, who are familiar with black caviar and other dainties, "I have food to eat of which you do not know" (John 4:32). The angel Raphael supposedly said to Tobit in the apocryphal book of this name (12:19), "It seemed, truly, as if I ate and drank with you. But I used an invisible meat and a beverage which men cannot see." The meat of the angels, of which men also can partake, consists in seeing God, in loving Him even in times of affliction, and in doing His will in all things. You can not sit luxuriously in restaurants, listening to jazz music, being served by half-naked waitresses, and eating from an endless menu, and at the same time participate at the heavenly banquet. No one can have both worlds. Heavenly food is reserved for those who are hungry.

Kierkegaard spoke truly when he said, "To represent a man who by preaching Christianity has attained and enjoyed in the greatest measure all possible worldly goods and enjoyments, to represent him as a witness to the truth is as ridiculous as to talk about a maiden who is surrounded by her numerous troop of children".

After years of preaching, a pastor should be poorer than before he began his ministry.

Our God is that of the narrow gate and of the needle's eye. If because of your social position you are not among the hungry, this is a simple matter to remedy: you can fast. But do not rob the poor of poverty. Do not rob the hungry of heavenly manna. Your well intentioned acts of philanthropy can be robberies.

Richard Wurmbrand

Re: - posted by SteveHale (), on: 2015/2/28 14:33

Right Attitude
Toward Poverty

It is our greed, our idolatry of money, that makes us equate poverty with unhappiness. The correct attitude of a well-to-do Christian toward a poor one is not pity, but rather envy or emulation. Although you might have more bread than your poor brother, and butter and anchovies upon your bread, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). The poor man has a privilege which you do not: Jesus has been sent to preach the gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18); only a poor man can fully hear the message. Rich men hear only a watered-down gospel delivered by pastors who have never hungered or fasted, who are rich or would like to be so.

Such pastors do not wish to lose their rich contributors and preach to them from the gospel only so much as will not give offense. They never tell their rich parishioners that they have as much chance to enter the kingdom of heaven as a camel to enter through a needle's eye—in other words, that their whole religion is in vain.

I repeat the question from the preceding meditation: Should we not help the poor? Surely we should, but on one condition—not to rob him of his previous poverty.

The way to help the poor is to follow Jesus' example and become poor like them.

We read in the Hebrew book Shemen ha tov how Rabbi Havyim Auerbach of Launtzitz was once petitioned by a shoemaker who had no wood to heat the room in which his wife and newborn infant lay. The rabbi immediately awakened a wealthy neighbor. The rich man invited the rabbi to come in, but the rabbi said he preferred to speak outside. It was bitter cold and the rich man had to stand shivering on the street and talk with the rabbi for a long time. At last the rabbi mentioned the shoemaker's plight and said "Now that you have felt the cold yourself you will know what to do." The rich man brought wood to the shoemaker's family, dragging it there himself in a wheelbarrow. Whoever has not felt the noose about his own neck cannot know the situation of someone who is in deadly danger.

No welfare state or philanthropic millionaire can replace the charitable works done long ago by monks and nuns who had taken vows of poverty. These people, some of them former members of the upper class, gathered the poor into the first hospitals, homes for aged people, and orphanages. They descended in reality and in spirit to the level of those whom they strove to help, and truly loved their neighbors as themselves. Embracing poverty for themselves, they could appreciate its value for others. The aged, the cripples, and the poor were helped not only with bread, but also by being brought to be regarded as a privilege what they had until then seen as a handicap.

In the United States and other countries there are now so many poverty programs which do not work. St. Francis of Assisi's program worked. He became poor and influenced many rich men to give away their money, not in heavily borne taxation, but in jubilating love.

There are diverse ways of giving help. I read that natives of Portuguese colonies, when they were sick, passed by the state hospitals and traveled many miles further to a Christian hospital. When asked why, since the state hospitals were as well equipped and gave the same treatment as the Christian ones, the natives answered: "Yes, the treatment is the same, but the hands are not the same." It is only the empty hand that can caress.

"Do not...oppress the afflicted at the gate" (Proverbs 22:22). "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). Jesus longed to arrive at Golgotha to fulfill the salvation of mankind. But in those days everyone, even executioners with victims, were stopped at the gates to answer questions, to show their papers. I too have seen it. It is not easy to be taken outside a prison gate, not even for an execution. The executioner knocks at the gate; the guard looks suspiciously through the peephole, then checks the written order. So it also in times of

efore.

Those who belong to Jesus are so happy to bear afflictions for sake; do not stop them at the gates to question them, to slow down their heroic march toward self-sacrifice by offering them pardons or conditions. By doing this you further oppress the afflicted ones who glory in their afflictions for Christ's sake.

A Christian must so conduct himself that his children will joyfully say like Jacob, "God of my father" (Genesis 32:9). Jacob had ancestors of whom he could boast. Abraham had left the highly civilized Ur of Chaldee, living as a stranger in a barren land in order to be free to worship God as he knew best. Isaac was ready as a child to magnify God by his death. Such men should not be robbed of the afflictions that promise them an eternal weight of glory.

Affliction has its difficulties. Often you are overcome by despair and feel God has hidden His face from you. But then you realize that it has only been for sport, like play with a child. You seek Him, find Him again, God and you, both exhilarated, both open wide with joy.

Richard Wurmbrand

Re: - posted by SteveHale (), on: 2015/3/4 17:35

The Bible Teaches Poverty

When God makes Abraham a declaration of love, Abraham's answer is, essentially, "What will You give me?" (Genesis 15:1,2). Let it not be so with us. May we not be only parasites on God. May our relationship with Him not be all asking but also giving.

When you are converted you must become poorer than you were before, for Jesus' sake. Then when you purchase a dress, you can offer Him the difference in price between a plain and a fashionable one. Jesus has given His blood for me. Should I not offer Him everything I have? Jesus forbids His disciples to have two coats (Matthew 10:10). What would He say about those who possess several houses and several cars?

The prophet Hosea had to buy his wife's love with money. Jesus is in the same predicamentâ€”He has had to buy His bride. Paul writes, "You were bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 7:23). The price paid for us is "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19). Would we sell ourselves to Him for less? Would we give our lives to Him simply because He is right, even if He had no forgiveness of sins, no paradise, and no earthly blessings to bestow? Are we His profiteers, or do we find in Him a Beloved to whom to give our all?

Jesus said, "Blessed are you poor" (Luke 6:20). The strongest Greek word for poverty, *ptohoiois*, a word indicating abject misery, is used here.

The Lord asks the apostles, "Do you not... remember the five loaves of the five thousand?" (Matthew 16:9). The superfluous bread does not belong to me but to the poor.

George Muller, who became a legend for the orphanages he founded and supported by power of faith and prayer, wrote in his diary, "We found the cheapest and plainest rooms in Bristol, but still too good for servants of Jesus. Our Master had nowhere to lay His head."

Just as Jesus knelt to wash the feet of His disciples, St. Hedwig of Silezia, a princess, gave gifts to the poor, kneeling before them. After such a life, Hedwig was able to say as her last word at her death, "Welcome."

Wealth is especially dangerous for ministers. A journal of architecture published a photograph of the villa of a renowned American evangelist as being the most beautiful villa of the year. This man might have a better chance of preparing good sermons in a modest apartment.

I have heard sermons in cathedrals in rich countries and sermons delivered in prison by pastors in chains. The latter had the more durable influence upon my soul.

Rabbi Yehiel Mier, having no money to give a beggar, gave him one of his wife's rings. When the wife learned of it, she was upset. "That was a very costly ring with a real diamond in it," she said. Rabbi Yehiel, hearing this, searched the town for the beggar. He came home triumphantly and assured his wife, "I found him and warned him to be sure to sell the ring for a good sum of money."

Let us be souls who freely give ourselves with all we have to Him. Love poverty! Become poor.

Richard Wurmbrand

Re: - posted by murrcoir (), on: 2015/3/5 17:00

Quote: The Bible Teaches Poverty

I would strongly disagree with you.

The promise of blessing given to Israel was part of the covenant God made with His chosen people. This blessing was contingent on Israel fulfilling its covenantal duties, namely to serve God alone and to obey His commandments. Whenever the people of Israel acted otherwise, curse would follow.

In the old covenant, the blessing of God manifested itself primarily in the daily life directly experienced by the people, and encompassed all areas of life, for example victory in battles against enemies, longevity, wealth, numerous descendants, and fertile soil Deut 28: 3-6.

Even in the old covenant, however, blessing already had a dimension which surpassed earthly welfare, as becomes clear in God's promise to Abraham: "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" Gen 12: 2-3.

This blessing extended far beyond the promise of personal wellbeing. It enabled Abraham to become a blessing for others as well.

That to me is what the bible teaches you become so blessed that you become a blessing to others.