

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

John 12:1-8
Lesson #29
Social Justice
02/21/2021



“Remember me, not for my faults and failures but for our Lord’s heart expressed in words and works through me.”



Mother Teresa

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Our response is to be motivated

NOT BY:

- Duty to the Law
- Political correctness
- Personal gain or security
- Access to God’s blessing
- Appearance of spirituality
- Responding to Kingdom ethics

BUT BY:



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John 12

¹ Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. ³ Mary therefore took a pound of **very costly perfume** of pure nard, and **anointed the feet of Jesus**, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ⁵ “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and **given to poor people?**” ⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because **he was a thief**, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. ⁷ Jesus therefore said, “Let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of My burial. ⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me.””

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Think of “costly perfume” as **material blessings, cultural advantage, and political power.**

Observation #1

Wealth is to be an instrument of **WORSHIP**
not an object of worship.

Three
applications
of wealth
in Jn.12:1-8



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“Our work is not social work it is religious work. We are not servants of social justice or the poor. We are serving Jesus. Our work is an act of worship.”

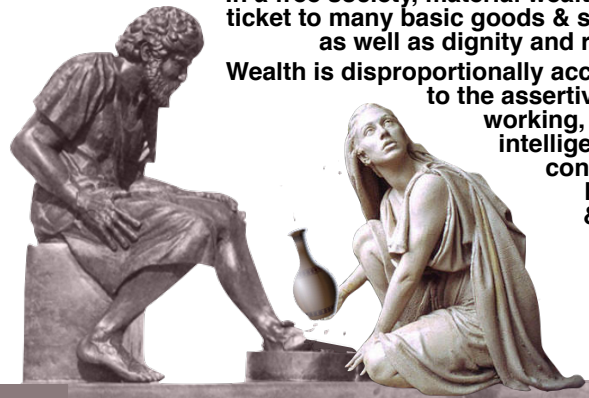
Mother Teresa



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Observation #2
Wealth is an instrument of **WITNESS** to the kingdom of God and the dignity of all who bear the image of God.

In a free society, material wealth is the ticket to many basic goods & services as well as dignity and respect. Wealth is disproportionately accessible to the assertive, hard working, strong, intelligent, well connected, healthy, & lucky.



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Observation #3
Material wealth is a blessing but only when it becomes an instrument of ministry.

Jesus honored the disciples by using his wealth (as their Lord) to include them in intimate fellowship with himself.



We do this when we use our material wealth, social position, listening ear, & a caring touch to affirm the dignity of those who are vulnerable (poor, marginalized, etc.)

Jesus called his disciples to do the same to each other.

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1. Realize that there will be social unrest, when many goods and services are tied to “net worth”.

The challenge of our free economic system is in the “justice for all” part of our Constitution.

Who owned American's Wealth in 2019

The Bottom 50% Owned 6%



The Top 1% Owned 29%



9% Owned 35%



40% Owned 30%



Source: wallstrategies.com Data: The Federal Reserve

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“In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of.

In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.”



Confucius

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2. Understand that Biblical poverty has many dimensions.

What did these groups share in common?



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“One of the greatest diseases is to be nobody to anybody.”

Mother Teresa



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The many dimensions of poverty.

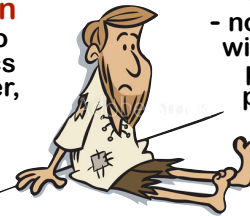
Material deprivation
- not able to afford basics (food, shelter, etc.)

Spiritual disorientation
- not empowered from within to experience personal dignity, power, and hope.

Social isolation
- not connected to a supportive community.

Political marginalization
- not empowered socially to affect change in one's life situation.

Cultural foundation
- not supported by a healthy tradition.



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Wealth has many dimensions.

Material abundance
- access to more than enough goods and services

Spiritual hope
- empowered from within to experience personal dignity, and hope.

Social connection
- connected to a supportive community.

Political clout
- empowered socially to shape one's life situation.

Cultural heritage
- supported by a healthy tradition.



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3. Follow the N.T.'s lead in addressing social issue.

1. Those who are the “have nots”

are instructed to find their peace and freedom in their relationship with Christ and not through their circumstances in a broken world.

2. Those who are the “have lots”

are instructed as stewards to follow Jesus and wash feet by offering up their assets to serve God and others.

Both share this in common.

They are called to follow the **Way of the Cross** as Jesus did.

Both sacrifice in bearing a cross.

They are called to respond, bear responsibility, and suffer.

Both start with worship of God

This is where social ethics start and end.

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“In the end, dear friend, it is always between us and God, not between us and them.”

Mother Teresa



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4. Expect the Way of the Cross to be politically incorrect from the world's perspective.

The “have nots”

as Aliens are to follow Jesus' example and find peace & justice in God's arms, not in a broken world.

The “have lots”

as Aliens are to follow Jesus' example and lay aside worldly power and privilege in the service of others.

This does not seem to be fair to either (by the world's standards).

Romans 12

“1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual **service of worship**. 2 And **do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

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Two ministries of the Spirit

Ministering **TO** us

Ministering **THROUGH** us

Paraclete

One who comes alongside to help

Advocate - assuring, comforting, sealing

Helper - working with us as a spiritual life coach

Teacher - revealing, reminding, encouraging

Power

One who equips for service

Energizing - passion

Gifting - special ability

Emboldening - giving courage

Sensitizing - caring wisdom,

John

Luke

18

"The game of life is not so much in holding a good hand as in playing a poor hand well."

H.T. Leslie

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4. Expect the Way of the Cross to be **politically incorrect** from the world's perspective.

"We shine when the fire inside us burns brighter than the fire around us."



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5. Expect the Way of the Cross to expose two besetting temptations.

The "have nots"

are tempted to be **bitter** - seeing themselves as victims and blame others for their suffering.

The "have lots"

are tempted to be **proud** - feeling they have earned what they have and give no credit to others.

They both need to be drawn to the Cross and look at Jesus (not themselves).

Hebrews 12:2

"**Looking to Jesus**, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

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Those in power can see things, make rules, and keep score in their favor (Lk.3:14) and not know it.

Isaiah 10

"1 Woe to those who make **unjust laws**, to those who issue **oppressive decrees**, 2 to **deprive** the poor of their **rights** and **withhold justice** from the **oppressed** of my people, making widows their prey and **robbing** the fatherless."

Romans 13:3

"3 For rulers are not a **cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil**. . . 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, **devoting themselves to this very thing**."

Scripture recognizes that social injustice can be systemic.

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"Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless."

Martin Luther King Jr.



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6. Our challenge is not our circumstances but our relationship to God and our circumstances.

James 1

"9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to **glory in his high position**; 10 and the rich man is to **glory in his humiliation**, because like flowering grass he will pass away."

Where does this perspective originate?

Philippians 2

"5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, **although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped**, 7 but **emptied Himself**, taking the form of a bond-servant, . . . 8. . . He **humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

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"My goal is not to eliminate poverty but to terminate a much deeper hunger - the need for dignity and love."

Mother Teresa

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7. Christian social ethics start in the church but don't end there.

It starts as a MODEL

with attention given to the dynamic relationships **WITHIN** the covenant community of faith.

It spreads as a MISSION

in witness of God's kingdom to the broader community, expressing God's love and design for all who bear His image.



This is one area where rendering to American Caesar and God come together.

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Social ethics are a big theme in the N.T.

love one another (John 13:35 - this command comes 16 times)
be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
honour one another **above yourselves** (Romans 12:10)
live in **harmony with** one another (Romans 12:16)
build up one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)
be **likeminded towards** one another (Romans 15:5)
accept one another (Romans 15:7)
admonish one another (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16)
care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
bear one another's **burdens** (Galatians 6:2)
forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:13)
be **patient with** one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)
be kind and **compassionate** to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
speak to one another **with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs** (Ephesians 5:19)
submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5)
consider others **better than yourselves** (Philippians 2:3)
look to the **interests of** one another (Philippians 2:4)
bear with one another (Colossians 3:13)
teach one another (Colossians 3:16)
comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13)
stir up one another to **love and good works** (Hebrews 10:24)
show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Peter 4:10)
clothe yourselves with **humility towards** one another (1 Peter 5:5)
pray for one another (James 5:16)
confess our faults to one another (James 5:16)

The **two greatest commands**, on which, according to Jesus, all the others depend, are concerned with relationships, 1st with God and 2nd with one another

(Matthew 22:36-40)

The "**one another**" starts within the community of faith but does not stop there.

(Galatians 6:10)

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"I do not feel anger toward the wealthy of this world who have worked hard and are blessed. I only feel anger when I see waste, when I see people throwing away things that we could use."

Mother Teresa

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"Statistically you need to do 3 things in this country to avoid poverty - finish high school, marry before having a child, and marry after the age of 20."

Only 8% of the families who do this are poor; 79% of those who fail to do this are poor.

William Galston,
Clinton White House

29

Luke 10 (Mary and Martha)

"38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 And she had a sister who was sitting and listening to the Lord, but Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that I am here to do all the serving alone? Help me.' 40 And the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, you are worried and bothered about these things; 42 but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'"

Expectations, Perspective, Priorities

ANGER

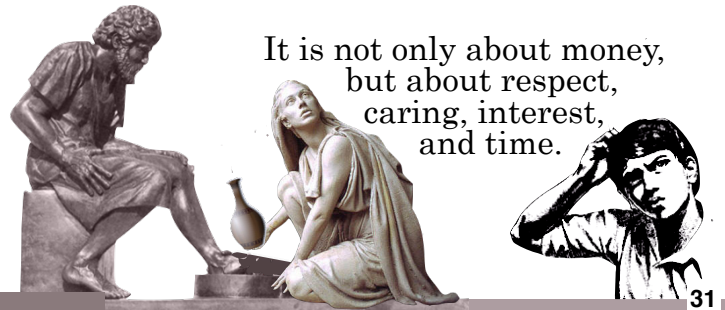
Anxiety

Insight

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Wealth
is a gift
from God.

Giving
is our worshipful
response.



It is not only about money,
but about respect,
caring, interest,
and time.

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"One small act of
kindness can create
large ripples of hope."

Mother Teresa



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