

PYRAMIDS, CIRCLES, AND JESUS' SHARED TABLE

Jesus' Vision for Human Community

Luke 4.18-19—"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor..." (cf. Isaiah 61.1-3)

Luke 7.22—So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard ...the good news is proclaimed to the poor. (cf. Matthew 11.2-6)

1. An "opiate of the masses":

Focus of an after-life serves as a way to mask the present reality and delude those who are poor with a future promise that keeps them from trying to change the world in the present.

2. Spiritual poverty:

Attitude of availability; openness/dependence on God.

Throughout the Bible, the greatest sin is pride; attributing to oneself that which is properly from God.

Spiritual poverty is the call of every believer and is to be cultivated as an attitude and a way of life.

This does not square with the experience of the global poor as they view the reality of poverty in their continent: malnutrition, disease, unemployment, lack of human dignity/hope, and death before their time.

Church was often aligned with the tyrannical governments, repressive militaries, and wealthy oligarchies.

3. Material poverty (Sin):

Lack of material needs; situation below that of basic human dignity.

Accident vs. sin—material poverty is not simply a condition that "happens," it is a sin—a violation of God's will for humanity.

Luke 6.20-26— Looking at his disciples, he said:

"Blessed are you who are **poor**, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who **hunger** now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who **weep** now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

But woe to you who are **rich**, for you have already received your comfort.

Woe to you who are **well fed** now, for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who **laugh** now, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets."

Matthew 5.3—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Luke 1.80—And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Matthew 5.5—Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Matthew 5.4—Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted

Matthew 5.6—Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Luke 15.1-2—Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and **eats with them.**"

A Shared Table

Luke 19.7-8—All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Mark 10.17-21—...Jesus looked at him and **loved him.** "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to **the poor**, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

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Stephen J. Patterson—“What does it actually mean for the empire of God to come? It begins with a knock at the door. On the stoop stand two itinerant beggars, with no purse, no knapsack, no shoes, no staff. They are so ill-equipped that they must cast their fate before the feet of a would-be host. This is a point often made by historical Jesus scholar John Dominic Crossan. These Q folk are sort of like ancient Cynics, but their goal is not the Cynic goal of self-sufficiency; these itinerants are set only for dependency. To survive they must reach out to other human beings. They offer them peace—this is how the empire arrives. And if their peace is accepted, they eat and drink—this is how the empire of God is consummated, in table fellowship. Then another tradition is tacked on, beginning with the words ‘Whenever you enter a town.’ This is perhaps the older part of the tradition, for this, and only this, also has a parallel in the Gospel of Thomas (14). There is also an echo of it in Paul’s letter known as 1 Corinthians (10: 27). Here, as in the first tradition, the itinerants are instructed, ‘Eat what is set before you.’ Again, the first move is to ask. The empire comes when someone receives food from another. But then something is offered in return: care for the sick. The empire of God here involves an exchange: food for care.” (The Lost Way, p. 74)

Gustavo Gutiérrez —“Love of neighbor is an essential component of Christian life. But as long as I apply that term only to the people who cross my path and come asking me for help, my world will remain pretty much the same. Individual almsgiving and social reformism is a type of love that never leaves its own front porch... On the other hand my world will change greatly if I go out to meet other people on their path and consider them as my neighbor, as the good Samaritan did... the gospel tells us that the poor are the supreme embodiment of our neighbor. It is this option that serves as the focus for a new way of being human and Christian in today’s Latin America. But the existence of the poor... is not neutral on the political level or innocent of ethical implications. Poor people are by-products of the system under which we live and for which we are responsible... That is why the poverty of the poor is not a summons to alleviate their plight with acts of generosity but rather a compelling obligation to fashion an entirely different social order.” (Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith, p. 14)

Luke 12.32-34—“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Acts 2.41-47—Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 4.32-35—All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Mark 6.8-10—These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.

Luke 10.7—Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Luke 11.41—But now as for what is inside you—**be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.**

Learning to Listen and Believe

Who are our vulnerable?

