

THE SAYINGS OF JESUS:

THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH & SOCIAL JUSTICE

What a first-century Jewish prophet of the poor might offer us today in our work of survival, resistance, liberation, reparation and transformation.

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. Death before one’s time.

Accident vs. sin—material poverty is not simply a condition that “happens,” it is a sin—a violation of the God of Life’s will for humanity.

Luke 4.18—“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (cf Isaiah 61.1-3)

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.

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

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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)

Charity Versus Justice

Sam Wells—“The traditional way of understanding discipleship as one of taking people out of the world because it is a hostile place, promising them a better place in God’s heavenly kingdom, has been radically transformed by this insight. Jesus call us rather to change the world in such a way that it will cease to be the hostile place it is, as we construct the way for God’s reign on earth . . . The one thing everyone seems to agree on today is that there’s plenty wrong with the world. There are only two responses to this—either go and put it right yourself, or, if you can’t, make life pretty uncomfortable for those who can until they do. When we take stock of our relationship with the powerful, we ask ourselves, ‘Does the shape of my life reflect my longing to see God set people free, and do I challenge those who keep others in slavery?’” (Introduction to *Binding the Strong Man: a political reading of Mark's story of Jesus* by Ched Myers)

A Heterogenous Shared Table & Jesus’ Preferential Option for the Vulnerable

Who are our vulnerable?

