

International House of Prayer of Greater Fort Wayne

...a day and night , city-wide, multi-church prayer and worship ministry

Jesus and the Poor

I once heard a story of a man who had lived a meager existence. He did not own much; an old car, a small house, and handful of personal possessions. When told of his impending death he made the following burial arrangements. *Upon my death sell all my possessions - purchase a new Cadillac, Halston Suit, Stetson Cowboy Hat (he was from Texas), and the finest cigar money can buy. Place me in the car and roll me into my grave!* As the man's body was being rolled into the grave one cemetery worker was heard to say to another **'now that's living!'**. OK you are right, that is likely a completely fabricated story (I won't even try to verify it, lol) but the closing line exemplifies a truth as real today as in Jesus' day - **the promise of Mammon is a lie!** Yet how often we hear someone refer to their material possessions as evidence of being blessed? Or said another way, we do not consider the one living in poverty as 'blessed' -do we?

That was true when Jesus walked the earth and it is true today - yet Jesus said *'...blessed are you who are Poor...'* (Lk 6:20) wait, what? In the face of the accepted understanding of blessing, Jesus proclaims the opposite in the Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6). In fact, He gets even more direct by saying *'...woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full...'* (vs 24). Later He says to the church in Laodicea (Rev. 3:17)...you say *'I am rich and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing...I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by the fire so that you may become rich...'*. Beloved, the god of mammon who defines us as what we have is a liar. Jesus, in the gospel, reveals the wealth of His mercy and grace to every human heart!

Jesus proclaims, in the Sermon on the Mount, *'blessed are the poor in spirit'* **meaning they have chosen not to trust Mammon but to live with an ongoing recognition of how far from God's Garden they have come!** To be poor in spirit is to live deeply in the invitation of Isaiah 55 and Revelation 22; you who hunger and thirst come to me... The poor in spirit live deep in the abundance of the God that makes us lie down in green pastures and leads us by still waters and restores our soul - who prepares a feast before us in the presence of those who trouble us - Psalm 23. The poor in spirit live focused, not on their possessions, but with a deep awareness of their poverty apart from surrendering to the abundance of the Good Shepherd. **Surrendered to His abundance we are able to live with hearts that overflow with His goodness and mercy. Little wonder then that some of the first signs of the Kingdom, according to Jesus, look like freedom and generosity.** When Jesus is asked by John's disciples in Matthew 11:1-3 *'...are You the One...?'* Jesus' response speaks directly to those who have lived under the power of the false ruler of this world *'the blind see, the lame walk, the dead are raised and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.'* then Jesus invites His disciples to do the same. Wow! **The signs of the Kingdom look like men and women who bring this good news to the actual poor.** Who make their life's pursuit, not about Mammon, but about living surrendered to the Good Shepherd. Here is what this means for me - how I look at the Poor, how I respond to the Poor, and how I care for the Poor is more often about what God is forming in me than it is within them. It is not about God trying to convince me to be more thankful for my personal abundance as it is about His Spirit's invitation to live surrendered to His abundant mercy and grace!

Now lets not get confused, we need to preach to the poor about God's abundance. But I must also point out that this has been twisted and perverted by some into a gospel being preached to the actual poor of 'financial prosperity' equating Gods abundance purely with financial blessing and completely avoiding the repeated call of Jesus to repent from Mammon. I do not have enough room to comment on how unkind and unchristlike this has been!

The gospel of God abundant mercy and grace cannot be proclaimed to the actual poor until we have had a reckoning with our own poverty of trusting the god of Mammon that is every bit as rampant in our culture as it was in Jesus day.

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And the secret is simply this: **Christ in you!**

Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come. Col 1:27b, JB Phillips

Blessed are the Poor and the Poor in Spirit - Jesus is revealing a different way to see the world. Mammon that longs to define you by what you own is a lie that will divide and destroy you leaving you empty. The ones who have real possession of what matters are those who have reckoned with this and know they cannot serve both God and Wealth (Mammon) Matthew 6:24 Rev. 3:18.

What is the Jesus way that lives opposite of this system? Matthew 6:2 ‘So when you give to the poor...’. To be clear giving money to the poor is not earning something from God or persuading Him to ‘bless’ us - He is a good shepherd (John 10, Psalm 23)! This doesn’t mean we are not thankful for what we have but that we understand that we are blessed because He has adopted us-period! Giving to the poor is at its core a proclamation of the gospel over our own hearts - that we choose to surrender to His freedom and generosity. As we do, we Re-Present that freedom and generosity in the face of spiritual rulers and authorities. There is One who has been raised up above all rule and authority in the present age and in the one to come. Jesus has come to bring freedom and reveal the generosity of the God head to the human heart. Giving to the poor is one of the most basic partnerships of the Kingdom of God being revealed today even as it was in Jesus’ day. Let this be very very clear, it is not about the quantity of our giving but the surrender of our hearts to the Good Shepherd!

As we continue partnering with the Father’s heart in San Pablo Taco Chico, El Salvador we are super excited to announce that we will be sending a team to El Salvador this year. At a cost of \$100 per family we are hoping to help over **50 families** who have now lived through two years of the pandemic. For most the hardships of the past two years have made day to day life even harder than it was previously. We want to invite you to partner this year as we send Pastor Louis Alvarado along with Dan & Angie Keck to not only oversee the distribution of the offering and clothing for children and families in need, but to bring encouragement and continue to nurture relationship. They will be traveling April 10-20. Will you please pray for them as they travel for protection and provision. Please pray for these families who have great physical need. Please pray and ask the Lord how He might have you partner. As of this writing we are almost half way to our goal and are trusting the Lord to make full provision for this outreach.

El Salvador Outreach

- COVID-19 prohibited travel in 2021 (IHOP and other ministries) raised \$10,000 dollars.
 - Much needed help for the people of San Pablo TachoChico was given that impacted 75 families.
 - Monthly gatherings continue.
 - The Good News is Preached to the Poor...
 - Please pray about participating in El Salvador this year as we send a team.
- **Join Us As we Pray**
 - Thursday 6—7 am—phone call meeting. Contact Ben @ 260-403-4948 to join.
 - Friday—7pm at 1414 Archer Avenue and On Zoom—833 669 278

With gratitude and integrity we steward your gifts. Thank you for partnering with the mission the Lord has given us in this hour as we partner with Him in His kingdom purposes.

Please make your **tax deductible** contribution to:

**IHOP Fort Wayne
5907 West Wallen Road,
Fort Wayne, IN 46818**

Ben and Denise, Please agree with us over these prayer needs for the next month...

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