

iT's a Matter of Justice

Scripture Reading — Deuteronomy 15:7-15

I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy ...
Deuteronomy 15:11

At a speech I heard recently the distinguished missiologist Ralph Winter stated that there are 27 million people in slavery right now. Many of them are children who have been sold by their own parents because the parents have no other means of support. Our immediate reaction is "Shame on them." But we should be cautious in our judgments. As our verses for today state plainly, poverty and slavery go hand in hand.

God demands justice for the poor. In fact, the whole social system for ancient Israel was set up to guard against gaining excessive wealth and to insure provision for the widow and orphan, the poor and the needy. God's command in Deuteronomy to give generously, without a grudging heart, is echoed by his word in the New Testament: everyone "should give ... not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

To listen to God's directions guarantees God's promise to provide all we need. To disregard them results in being "found guilty of sin." But this is not just about do-ing the right thing, as if it's a duty. It's about showing the love of God revealed supremely in Jesus Christ. This must be the top stimulus for our giving.

Look around you today. Who can you love? With whom can you share the riches God has given you?

Prayer

Lord, help us not only to be openhanded toward our needy brothers and sisters. Help us also to be openhearted, so that they may experience justice. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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