

The Poor

Scripture Reading — John 12:1-8

"You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

John 12:8

We've been talking a lot about riches and rich people. But what about poor people? Didn't Jesus say, "You will always have the poor among you"? Yes, he did. But we may not quote this passage to justify poverty or our lack of effort to do anything about it. Jesus also said he came "to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). Trying to justify anyone's poverty on the basis of Jesus' words would certainly not be good news.

So if Jesus is not giving us an excuse for stinginess, what is he saying? Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus was dining at the house of his friends in Bethany. As he reclined with his feet away from the table, Mary poured a whole bottle of expensive perfume on his feet and wiped them with her hair.

Judas loved money more than he loved his master. As the treasurer of Jesus' company, Judas controlled the corporate moneybag. His complaint that this precious perfume should have been given to the poor is really an attempt to put this wealth under his control.

But Jesus saw Mary's generosity as a gift from God the Father to help prepare him for the cross and tomb.

Can Mary's gift be replicated today? Yes. Jesus' disciples have many opportunities to give to Jesus as they serve the poor.

For us, that time is now. The opportunities are many.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we confess that we often make excuses rather than joining in the fight against poverty. We know you care about the poor. Forgive us, we pray. In your name, Amen.

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