

The Poor Are the Most Treasured Part

Scripture Reading — 1 John 4:13-18

God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it. — 1 Corinthians 12:24

Anxiety blocks love. Anxiety breeds prejudice. Anxiety leads to hatred, or at least causes people to ignore those who are different from one's "own kind." "Perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18) and sees people as God sees them.

People tend to feel afraid of those whom society considers "weak"—those who are poor, disabled, or dealing with mental illness. I've heard people say, "We can't have too many of those people attend our church, or we'll get overwhelmed." Yet Jesus sought out just this kind of person. They are parts of the body that receive special honor from God.

The most important parts of our bodies are not our hands and feet. The most honored parts are hidden away where they receive the most protection: the brain, the liver, the intestines, the lungs. Our bodies give them special honor, though we rarely think of them.

A church fellowship that includes people whom society considers weak will be the healthiest, but without them the church is like a body without a lung. The theologian Henri Nouwen once wrote, "The church as the people of God can truly embody the living Christ among us only when the poor remain its most treasured part. Care for the poor, therefore, is much more than Christian charity. It is the essence of being the body of Christ."

Prayer

Loving God, drive out anxiety from me with your love. So fill me with love that I see the poor, the outcast, the people at the margins as you see them: essential for a healthy church. Amen.

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