

Turning an Excuse Into an Incentive

Scripture Reading — Matthew 26:6-13

“The poor you will always have with you ...”
Matthew 26:11 —

When some people quote these words of Jesus? “The poor you will always have with you”? they say it in a way that suggests we don't have to be too concerned about helping poor people, since there will never be an end to poverty. That kind of thinking makes it easy to lose a sense of urgency about social justice and caring for others in need. To avoid that kind of thinking, we need to dig a little deeper into the words of Jesus. When he says, “The poor you will always have with you,” he is quoting from the Old Testament. The original setting of these words is in Deuteronomy 15:11, and the full reading in that context is enlightening. God says to the Israelites, “There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.” Earlier in that chapter God makes clear as the people are poised to enter the promised land, “There should be no poor among you,” for in the land God was giving them they would be richly blessed (Deuteronomy 15:4). The presence of poor people among us is the very thing that should compel us to ease their suffering. In so much of the world the divide between the rich and the needy is increasing. Each of us needs to ask, “How can the Lord use me to help?”

Prayer

Forgive us, Lord, for not being concerned enough about the poor. Help us to share your gifts with others. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for becoming poor for our sake. Amen.

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