

gospel & the poor

karen lowe

Karen is married to Mark, they have four children and live in Llanelli where she is the senior leader of Antioch Church. She is passionate about God's presence, the poor and the release of mission movements rooted in the Celtic Christian tradition.



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Introduction

*“The gospel through the eyes of the poor
is like a second conversion.
I was born again, again”*

Poverty Defined

EXTREME POVERTY - households cannot meet basic needs for survival. They are chronically hungry, unable to access health care, lack the basic amenities of safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for some or all of the children, and perhaps lack rudimentary shelter - a roof to keep the rain out of the hut, a chimney to remove the smoke from the cook stove - and basic articles of clothing such as shoes. Unlike moderate and relative poverty, extreme poverty only occurs in developing countries.

MODERATE POVERTY - refers to conditions of life in which basic needs are met but just barely.

RELATIVE POVERTY - is generally construed as a household income level below a given proportion of average national income. The relatively poor, in high income countries, lack access to cultural goods, entertainment, recreation, and to quality healthcare, education and other prerequisites for upward social mobility.

* How has poverty impacted you?

Biblical background - God's bias to the poor

Key Scriptures -

Deuteronomy 15 : 1 - 18

Luke 4 : 18 - “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come.”

Connect - Pray the Bible

Pray these Scriptures as a Prayer.

MERCY

Father in Heaven, You have said:

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He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker,
but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.

Rich and poor have this in common:

The Lord is the Maker of them all.

So I will not exploit the poor because they are poor
nor crush the needy in court, for you will take up their case
and will plunder those who plunder them.

The righteous care about justice for the poor,
but the wicked have no such concern.

And You say, he who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord,
and He will reward him for what he has done.

Let me be like Job who said:

I rescued the poor who cried for help,
and the fatherless who had none to assist him.

The man who was dying Blessed me;

I made the widow's heart sing.

I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.

I was a Father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger.

I broke the fangs of the wicked
and snatched the victims from their teeth.

Proverbs 14 : 31; 22 : 2, 22 - 23; 29 : 7; 19 : 17; Job 29 : 12 - 13, 15 - 17, 25)

Then ask Him to show you His heart for the least, for the children.

Ask Him what He would like you to do, what steps He would like you to take.

Tell someone about these steps and take them, that dreams and visions might become reality.

The Holistic Gospel - the true test of the Kingdom Commitment to a holistic gospel is practical concern for the poor.

How is this lived out amidst complex issues of religion, ethnicity, politics, economic pressures, population growth, environmental concerns. . . . ?

* Case study Rwanda - How did the failure of a holistic approach to gospel contribute to the genocide in Rwanda where between 500,000 to 800,000 were killed mainly Tutsi's and some moderate Hutu's.

* case study: structural injustice and oppression in modern day slave trade/sex trade. . . . DVD clip.

Supernatural gospel and the poor, Territorial Spirits and Structural powers - issues of Spiritual Warfare.

Making a difference, by the way we live - Wealth and the gospel.

The riches of the few is directly linked to the poverty of the many - Is that really what Jesus taught?

Connect

Matthew 25 : 34 “ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘ come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, ‘ Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? when did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘ I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did it for me.’ “

I still find it painful to read this passage, yet there was a time when I could barely read it at all because the challenge of it was so far removed from the life I was living, even though I was “ in Mission “ at the time. The priority of the poor changed and is changing the focus of my life. There is an imperative to feed and clothe the poor, the love of Jesus compels it yet it becomes much more than food and clothes it can become a connection with his love, with his compassion - for all involved. Reflect on personal priorities and choices in the light of this scripture.

John Wesley and the ‘ parable of the shrewd manager ‘

Quote from (God of the Poor A Biblical vision of God’s present rule - Dewi Hughes)

John Wesley has three headings in his sermon on the point of the parable of ‘ The Shrewd Manager ‘ made in Luke 16 : 9: a) Earn all you can. b) Save all you can. c) So that you can give all you can. In sermon 87, ‘ The Danger of Riches ‘ , on 1 Timothy 6 : 9, he applies the points of the earlier sermon specifically to himself: I gain all I can [namely, by writing] without hurting either my soul or my body. I save all I can, not willingly wasting anything, not a sheet of paper, not a cup of water. . . Yet by giving all I can, I am effectually secured from “ laying up treasures upon earth “ . . . And that I do this, I call all that know me, both friends and foes, to testify.’ John Wesley undoubtedly lived according to his exposition. He was one of the most successful church leaders ever at making money. He wrote books and pamphlets which sold very well and made him enormous fortune by any standard. But being free from the worship of Mammon he was very careful to take for himself only what he needed to sustain his life with some dignity and gave most of his fortune to the poor. In this attitude he reflected the teaching of the apostle Paul that using leadership in the church in order to make oneself rich is an abomination.

Make a Difference - Locally, Nationally, Internationally

- * Recognition and use of giftings
- * Community as a sign and wonder in a consumerist society
- * Fair trade is not new

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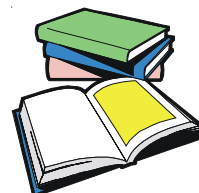
- * Choose the poor as a priority -
Stories of 'walking the land and carrying his presence' amongst the 10 poorest communities in Wales.
- * The Power of Advocacy
- * Making a difference internationally
(DVD) - the power of choice.

Connect - Party-Time

“The next time you put on a dinner, don't just invite your friends and family and rich neighbours, the kind of people who will return the favour. Invite some people who never get invited out the misfits, from the wrong side of the tracks. You'll be- and experience- a blessing. They won't be able to return the favour, but the favour will be returned - oh how it will be returned at the resurrection of God's people “.

Ask Jesus what you should do and who you should invite.

further information



God of the Poor a Biblical Vision of God's Present Rule - Dewi Hughes
Rich Christians in an age of Hunger - Ron Sider
Companion to the Poor - Viv Griggs
The politics of Jesus - J. Howard Yoder
This Immoral Trade Slavery in the 21st Century - Coxen Marks
The Hidden Face of Eve Women in the Arab World - Nawal El Saadawr
The End of Poverty - Jeffery Sachs
The Justice God is Seeking, Responding to the heart of God through
compassionate worship - David Kuis.

Session Impact Form

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How has this session impacted my understanding?

What parts of my character and attitudes have been challenged?

What issues do I need to deal with and pray through?

What practical action / changes can I make, in consultation with my discipler, in terms of my lifestyle / life?

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