

John 12

"¹ Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. ³ Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to poor people?" ⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. ⁷ Jesus therefore said, "Let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of My burial. ⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me."

Material wealth can be used in the service of three things.

- **Self** - self gratification
- **Others** - social responsibility
- **God** - spiritual worship

This story stands as a challenge to all disciples of Jesus who reduce Christian faith to social ethics and personal fulfillment outside the context of spiritual peace through the cross of Christ.

Observation #1

The ethics of work and wealth start with worshipful attention to Jesus rather than the poor.

"You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind" 1st

Spiritual worship

The main thing. . .



. . . is to keep the main thing the main thing.

Social responsibility

Self gratification

"and your neighbor 2nd as yourself"

Upside down (the world)

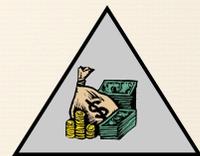
Right side up (the kingdom)

Social responsibility **Self gratification**



Spiritual worship

Spiritual worship



Social responsibility

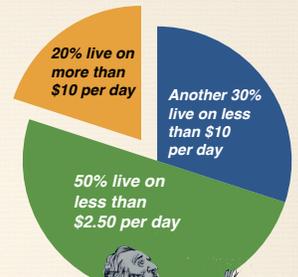
Self gratification

Mother Teresa



When asked about her ministry as a social worker she replied, "My ministry is not social work, it is worship. My care for the suffering is my love for Jesus."

Observation #2 The poor are always with us and should not be ignored.

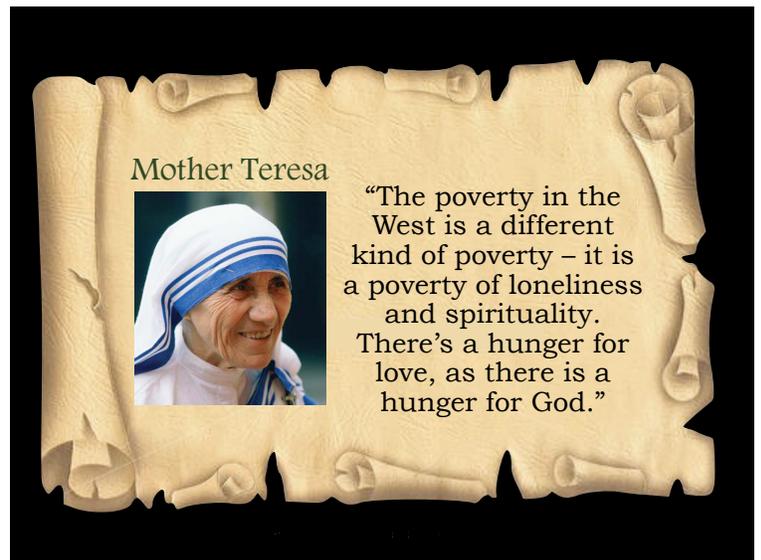


% earning \$1.25 per day

Sub-Saharan Africa	48%
South Asia	40%
East Asia & Pacific	15%
Latin America	12%

Source: World Bank





Poverty is about more than material needs.

Social
- not connected to a supportive community or the social structures of power.

Political
- not free to effect change in one’s life situation.

Material
- not able to afford basics (food, shelter, etc.)

Spiritual
- not empowered from within with hope, dignity, and purpose from a relationship with God.

Forbes

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THE POWER OF Nonprofit Venture Capital

INNOVATION SAVES THE WORLD

THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS MAKING AN IMPACT PLUS AMERICA'S BEST AND WORST CHARITIES

poverty

“Dignity is more important to the human spirit than material wealth.”

Observation #3
Messianic ministry is indexed to spiritual & material poverty

2 Corinthians 8:9

“For you know the Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

Jesus was conspicuous in his identification with the poor.

The Incarnation
Philippians 2

“⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond servant, and being made in the likeness of men ⁸. . . He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

The people he was drawn to
The choice of disciples
The Crucifixion

Jesus

Revealed himself as one of the poor

Reached out to the poor

Renewed hope for the poor

Recognized the value of the poor

Recruited disciples from among the poor

Required that they minister to the poor

When I say ~ “Yes but . . .”

Jesus’ Spirit says ~

“You need to spend more time on your “yes” and less time on your “but.”

Addressing poverty means addressing the culture of poverty and the dignity of people that it destroys.

Our welfare systems too often erode human dignity and fund a “welfare industry” rather than really bring aid to the poor.

Jesus’ mission was not a drone strike but boots on the ground.

Where to start ~

1. *Listen, touch, pray with, and give time to those to whom you minister.*
2. *Support ministries that enable #1 to take place.*
3. *Promote a mixed economic culture within the church.*
4. *Stop perpetuating a economically segregated social life.*