

Our Opportunity to help the Poor It's an Honor

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Summary: Though Jesus himself said “the poor you have with you always”, the Eternal God has a plan that if followed, would result – in his own words - with nobody being poor. Listen to Father’s loving words on how He views the poor. We also discuss “third tithe” briefly. Father provides clear *opportunities* for us to help the needy. How would you like to lend to God? Hear what He promises, when we help poor folks. This is not a “redistribution of wealth” sermon imposed by big government – but a sermon about what God in heaven says He will do for us if we follow His directions, especially when it comes to poor people.

Key words: poor, the poor, third tithe, tithe of the third year, laws of the poor, Deut 26:12-15.

(Notes will be summaries of paragraphs in many cases, rather than a word-for-word transcript.)

Greetings fellow children of the Highest, members of the house of God.

(Preliminary comments inviting people to check out the website, the new blogs, and reminding people they can download messages to smart phones, Ipods, etc.)

If you were in dire straits, which group of people would most likely help you – the very rich, or the very poor? Who would most likely share their food with you and give you some money?

Yeshua (Jesus) said “The poor you will have with you always” (Mark 14:7). Some use that as an excuse why they don’t actively do anything for the poor. I hope, by the time we finish this sermon, we will all understand we have some wonderful opportunities to put God’s way of life into practice, to be His tool of blessing some very needy people – and we will in turn be blessed mightily in due season for being so generous.

This sermon is *not* about our *obligations* to the poor but about our *opportunities* *with* the poor.

(Some comments about the lives of the poor.)

The time is coming when a lot of us brethren and people all over the world will be a lot poorer than we are now because of the coming Great Tribulation. Remember Hebrews 11 ends with a description of how God's people sometimes had to hide in caves and live in goatskins. Many times they had to flee city to city. That's certainly not conducive to earning a living or running a business. *Here's my point: We'll see that God Almighty says He will more likely provide for, and bless, those who had been kind to the poor?*

Father in heaven made it very clear the reason we have a lot of poor people is because we're not following His plans for wealth and a stable society. He says clearly if his plans were followed, there would be no poor in the land (Deuteronomy 15:4). But because the Eternal knew beforehand that humanity would not have his heart on this matter, he also says we will always have the poor around, in fact (**John 12:8; Deut. 15:11**). **Deut 15:4 and 11** are not contradictions.

You will see however, God's way of helping the poor is not the handout. God's way is not the welfare state. Yahweh's way is kindness and then giving them opportunities to climb out of their hole of poverty themselves! He teaches us to give a hand-up, not a handout. He calls it "strengthening the hand of the poor" (**Ezek 16:49**). We'll see many scriptures about this as we go along.

For example, corners of fields were to be left for the poor – but the poor still had to be the ones to go work and harvest it! So as I speak of the poor, I want to be kind and soft-hearted to them, but I also realize they must be willing to get up and work as well. So instead of just giving a handout, I'll invite them to work my yard for a day for \$10 or \$12 an hour. This leaves them some dignity. Paul said, "He who doesn't work, shouldn't eat" (**2 Thess. 3:10**).

2 Thess 3:8-12

8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

Every *able*-bodied welfare recipient should be doing *something* constructive for society in return – picking up trash along the roads, helping clean up after natural disasters such as Joplin, MO.

So let's hear Father's words to us, his kids. He gives a definite balance, which if followed, would have prevented the welfare-nanny state we are moving into, and kept us from having any poor.

I'm not a poor person now, but I've known poor. Maybe it would help for you to understand that I am speaking from experience.

I grew up the son of a missionary in the countryside of the Philippines, far from the bustling city of Manila, which itself has one of the worst slums in the world. I saw poor. Beggars were everywhere. We ourselves were poor. We lived over there without running water, without a car most of the time, without a phone, without a stove as you know it, without a fridge, without a freezer, without screened windows, without air conditioning – and often without enough food or even shoes. We went everywhere either barefooted or with sandals, as most Filipinos did. We certainly had no washing machine or dryer. We had no bathtub and no flush toilets. We pumped water from our well. We put up mosquito nets every night to keep from waking up in the morning with mosquito bites all over us. We would buy big blocks of ice and put them in an ice chest to keep certain things cold. My mom ironed clothes with a metal iron into which she put hot coals. It was easy to get too hot and burn clothes. I know poor. My toys as a child were bugs. We couldn't afford toys unless occasionally some American sent us some in a "CARE" package. But as a child, frankly I was happy and didn't know the difference.

When I'd go up to my father's mission school, I soon would become aware of how poor everyone was. My missionary father seldom could afford to buy live or whole chickens, so they'd go to the shops and buy chicken *feet* or even just chicken *heads* to season the broth they would feed the orphan children. A number of those orphans were children who had seen violence. One girl – who is now in the Portland area – actually witnessed his own dad hacked to death in front of her own eyes. My dad took in her entire family and protected them, fed and housed them, and taught them God's word as he best knew how. He didn't have enough to properly feed and care for his own family, but he took in dozens of others. He also adopted directly into our family two very young boys who were dying of tuberculosis. Their mom brought them to our door and begged my dad to adopt them, as she had no money for their health needs, medicines or hospitalization.

When we came back to the U.S., my Mom started us all out on welfare before she finally received enough training to get a job. I'm in my teenage years at this point. I clearly remember the embarrassment of food stamps at the grocery store. We lived in cheaper housing – which meant no air condition, no washing machine, and no drier. We had a rickety old car. Our clothes were from what you'd call "Goodwill" or "Salvation army" today – basically used clothing facilities for the church. I don't recall ever going to a dentist all my teen years. We couldn't afford to ever go to doctors and dentists. Our furniture also was whatever others no longer wanted, including our spring bunk beds. But thanks to a few people in the church who helped my Mom from time to time. May Father bless them forever.

I worked and paid my own way through college and have been able to buy a fairly nice home (the bank still owns it) and drive a fairly nice 10 year old car. I am not rich, but we pay the bills and we're comfortable -- usually. Right now we run our own business, we're entrepreneurs of sorts, which sometimes I think means "going broke". We also do this website as time allows. We do not have some rich pension plan like some public employees. We certainly have considerably *less* than enough saved up for retirement looming on the horizon, less than \$100k for sure for the 2 of us. We know even we could lose even the small savings we have in a heartbeat if the stock market and economy tanks. So this is where I come from in this sermon: raised very poor, doing better now, but still day-to-day.

I know poor and I know comfortable. I prefer comfortable, but don't want to ever forget our poor roots. . . or the *privilege* we have to help the poor among us.

The subject of the "poor" is certainly on God's heart and mind. Father says one of the sins of ancient Sodom, being replicated by our societies today, is this: "neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (**Ezek. 16:49**).

WHY we need this Message

Do we really need a whole sermon about our opportunity to help the poor? Yes. With so many scriptures about the poor, the topic must be important to He who is Father to the poor or the rich.

WHY do we need this message, this sermon? *Because at least our very reward, if not our very salvation, could be on the line based on how we treat the poor.* If you think you don't need a whole sermon on it, what steps can point to proving you are helping the poor?

Church or personal responsibility, or Gov't Responsibility

We used to teach a message of “third tithe” or “tithes for the poor” every third year, but I believe that doctrine is going by the wayside more and more. The fact is --Yahweh wanted us to store a tithe and to use that for those who needed help. This is not a sermon on “third tithe” or on tithing at all. We still practice it. There are legitimate questions from scripture about exactly how the tithe for the poor was to be done, but that’s worthy of another sermon later.

I believe our Father wants us seeing this topic of helping the poor as a *personal* responsibility – and not palm it off to “the church” to handle, or for “the government” to handle. Personally we do not send 3rd tithe to an organization for several reasons:

- I’ve seen it misused in the past
- It takes away the personal element

Here are the 2 main verses which speak of the “tithe of the 3rd year”. (Who else do you know who still will even talk about this?)

Tithe of the Third Year

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

28 "At the end of *every* third year you shall bring out the tithe of your *produce* of that year and *store it up within your gates*. 29 And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.”

Notice it says at the end of the 3rd year to bring the tithe of produce. This tithe of the 3rd year was not something *you* got to eat, as in the case of the tithe for the Feasts, nor was it the same as the tithes for the Levites and priests – which only they could eat. Just think of that.

And this tithe for the poor is every 3rd year, not 2 out of 7 years, as was often taught. *Assistance to the poor is not a debt they owe us that gets to be cancelled in the 7th year of cancelling all debts* – in my view at least. And, it says nothing of sending it to “headquarters” but to store and manage it *locally*, “within your gates”.

Related to that point: we are not to be so devout that we send in funds (or 10% of the produce) to a church while ignoring our needy kin. Yeshua himself condemned that when he taught against those saying they couldn’t help a needy family member because their money was already committed to God’s use, called “Corban” (**Mark 7:11-13**). Be sure to remember to provide for your extended family when they badly need your help – even out of your “3rd tithe” funds.

Was this an extra 10% (tithe means 10%) or was this the tithes of the 3rd year were to be used to help the poor? I am tending to think the latter. One reason I do: 10% given every year to a small group of people in ministry – no matter how big their Work is – is a ton of money and it can get abused and squandered! God surely wants there to be careful stewardship and accounting of that money and make 2 years’ worth last the 3 years, and use the 3rd year’s tithes for the poor. That’s how I read it. In our case, we personally still give an extra amount for assistance to the poor, but I’m just saying, it could be read the other way too. There certainly was and is considerable dialogue on both sides of that issue.

In the next passage we'll read – Deut 26:12-15, Yahweh even says we should remember to ask Him to bless us after faithfully obeying the 3rd tithe year assistance.

Deuteronomy 26:12-15

12 "*When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year — the year of tithing* — and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat *within your gates* and be filled, 13 then you shall say before Yahweh your God: 'I have removed **the holy tithe** from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them. 14 I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed any of it for an unclean use, nor given any of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of Yahweh my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me. 15 Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, "a land flowing with milk and honey."'

I know there's a lot to discuss here. Scripture teaches tithes on the *increase* (Deut 26:12), not the whole amount, of your livestock and produce. In fact it was every 10th sheep, so if you only had 9, there was nothing to tithe on. That means God was sensitive to the fact you had to have something to live on yourselves as well. Then every third year Scripture clearly teaches an attitude of sharing with the poor, and the tithes of that year were to be used for the needy.

I know some believe many things about tithing. Some teach there is no tithing in new covenant times. Other people teach Hebrews 7 clearly shows there is a change of the law from tithing to Levites to the ministry. I must end the discussion on tithing there, as there would be a lot to discuss. I still tithe. I still help the poor. That's my bottom line.

Brothers and sisters in the Messiah: We have a lot of brethren out of work. We have others who work, but simply are poor. I hope this message will lead you to adopt someone poor, in a sense, and take them under your wing and just help them thru this tough spot in their lives. I remember in 1991, I was broke and broken. Not 2 cents to rub together. Trying to start a new job in a new town – stone broke. And out of the blue, my sister Paula found me a place to stay with reasonable cost, and sent me \$50 to just help out. I've repaid that many times over since but I'll never forget how that \$50, even though it was only \$50, seemed to save my life.

(Section on how and why we have made excuses for not helping the poor.) Let's soften our hearts to the needy.

I hope you've learned that I will teach you what God's word actually *says*. *I use a lot of scriptures in my sermon, using God's own words*. I hope the rest of this message will change your life!

REASONS TO ACTIVELY HELP THE POOR and why we need this sermon:

1. **The Kingdom of God is going to those who practice the Kingdom's way of life, which includes respecting and caring for the poor. Actually doing something to help people in need is the Kingdom's way!**

I gave a sermon a while back, one of my favorites, on "The Least of these my brethren". I hope you listen to it. In Matthew 25, Christ describes a class of people who see needs people have, and do something about it.

Matthew 25:34-36

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was **hungry** and you gave Me food; I was **thirsty** and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was **naked** and you clothed Me; I was **sick** and you visited Me; I was **in prison** and you came to Me.'

Without belaboring this verse, I will simply ask each of us: *who can we point to in the last 30 days whom we have literally helped – who was hungry, needing clothing, or in jail, or sick?* Maybe instead of jail – how about a nursing home? Who in a nursing home have we gone to see lately? I preach to myself. I do from time to time, but need to again. Who can we point to whom we did housework for or mowed their lawn – because they were too sick to do it themselves? Whom have we even just called up to cheer them up in the past 30 days?

(My story of what happened in the nursing home.)

What is said in Matthew 25, is also said in Isaiah 58 about fasting – and how it results in changes in our lives. We quit being so tight-fisted and instead share what we have with the needy. It speaks of giving bread to those who are without, and so on.

I said actively doing something is the kingdom's way. Pure religion is defined in **James 1:27** as keeping oneself unspotted from the world's ways – but visiting or helping the widow and the fatherless. Now turn to James 2:15-17.

James 2:15-17

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

2. **If you knew the Son of God was on the earth, how would you treat Him? We need this sermon because the way we treat the poor is the way God feels we are treating Him!**

If you knew the Eternal himself needed food or help – would you help him? Of course we all would! That's the point. He is telling us, "**I am** that poor person! Treat him or her like you would if it were me at your front door. You honor me by caring for my poor!"

Proverbs 14:31 (let this verse sink in; read it twice)

31 He who oppresses the poor *reproaches his Maker*, [WHY? Prov. 17:5 says “mocks”]
But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.

Let that sink in. You go to an Assisted Living facility or nursing home – and just sit and talk to someone there, they’re always so lonely – you’ve done it to God the Father himself; you’ve done it to the Messiah himself.

If the Son of God himself stood before you needing a loan, would you give it if you could?

Proverbs 19:17

“He who has pity on the poor *lends to Yahweh* (the LORD), [Wow!]
And *He* will pay back what he has given”. [Do you think Yahweh will be generous?]

3. We need this sermon because helping the poor is what God would be doing, and we are to become more and more like Him.

One thing I find very interesting is that when Judas left the Passover supper just before he betrayed Yeshua – what did people surmise from that? It’s an interesting little read:

John 13:27-29

27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." 28 But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. 29 For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," *or that he should give something to the poor.*

Yeshua (Jesus) must have given to the poor often enough that it seemed normal to reason that Judas was going out to help the poor. This is a very telling verse about our Savior.

Yeshua even used the motif of the poor as a test to see how serious someone was in following him. A rich young ruler came to see Jesus and wanted to be a disciple. Remember what Jesus said? **Matthew 19:21** – “If you want to be perfect, go and sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” This is what Yeshua our Husband is like! His fiancée, the church, will be like that too.

Luke 14:12-14

12 Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 But *when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind.* 14 *And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you;* for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

How are we doing? When you have a dinner party, are you inviting the ones not so personable, kinda odd, certainly poor, not the life-of-the-party kind of person, perhaps the widows and old and infirm – as well as inviting your regular friends?

OK, that’s what our Savior taught. Does he practice what he preaches? Don’t you think those who will be at his wedding supper fit that bill? I tell you, yes, we fit that bill.

Luke 14:21-24

21 So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and **bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.**' 22 And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' 23 Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

That's exactly the same message we read in Isaiah 58:7. When we fast, it is supposed to bring about real changes – even to the way we treat the poor. Isa. 58:7 says after fasting properly, it should result in us bringing to our house “the poor who are cast out; and when you see the naked, you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh”.

The result? More blessings, more answered prayer.

Isaiah 58:8

“then your light shall break forth like the morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your **righteousness** shall go before you;
The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and Yahweh will answer;
You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'

Right now we call it answered prayer if we're alive after an operation. That's great, but that's not the Biblical example of healing, let's face it! We're not being healed as often as God would like to, because we're not esteeming his body – the church – highly enough (**1 Cor. 11:29-32**) and we're not caring enough for the poor among us. So it's back to reaping what we're sowing! I'm not saying those in health conditions are the ones who sowed bad seed. Not at all.

I'm saying as a group, God is not blessing his people like he wants to – and that IS our fault collectively, and there are people hurting right now because we as a group have not been kind to the body!! Think about it! We as His people in the end time think we're so good, but we're making our King feel so sick he wants to vomit (**Rev. 3:16**). He feels sick about us! That's not what you want to hear, but it's what it says in the Word. *So the body of Christ is reflecting how HE feels: SICK!* Once we get the spiritual body respecting its parts – i.e., one another – we will see more healings. I'm sure of that.

It's not good enough to say “You're on my prayer list” if there's something dynamic and concrete we can do. We can tell the needy that we believe and have faith they will find work, or have food somehow to feed their kids – but our faith must be backed up by action as we read earlier in James 2:15-17.

We don't see any disconnect between what Yeshua taught, and what He actually did:

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, **that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor**, that you through His poverty might become rich.

Yahweh certainly notices those who help the poor, and He notices what the poor do. When God sent Peter to Cornelius, it is very telling that Cornelius is actually told that all his alms had been noticed. The angel who came said, “Your alms have come up as a memorial before God.” Wow! God sees when we help people out (**Acts 10:4**, but read **10:1-7**).

You and I may not have a vision of an angel telling us that our checks of assistance to the needy have been noted by God – but then again, we just have been told that. I’ve just read it to you. God *does* note our acts of loving assistance to the poor. I’ll read a couple more, in case you need the encouragement that even though *people* may not know, *God* does.

Generosity even FROM the poor

You who are poor, God sees you. God knows you. God hears you. *And when you give of what little bit you have, God really notices!* We all certainly know about:

- The story of the widow casting in all she had – her two “widow’s mites” and how the Son of God noticed it! (**Mark 12:41-44**).
- **The widow of Zarepath** who gave her last baking to Elijah, and then was going to die – because even when she, a POOR OF THE POOR, GAVE and shared, God blessed HER and kept her and her son alive (**1 Kings 17:8-16**). *That story is there to teach even you who are poor hearing this – share even what little you have.*
- In the post-resurrection times, early Christians in Judea had a famine and the rest of the church came to their aid. Aid came even from those who were poor (Acts 11:27-30).

The Corinthians were told about how the Macedonians (Philippians) gave “out of their poverty”.

2 Corinthians 8:2-6 Apologetics Study Bible

2 during a severe testing by affliction, their abundance of joy *and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their generosity*. 3 I testify that, on their own, according to their ability and *beyond their ability*, 4 they begged us insistently for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints, 5 and not just as we had hoped. Instead, *they gave themselves especially to the Lord, then to us by God’s will*.

The Macedonians were not concerned about being able to afford to help. They realized the owner and Creator of the universe could take care of their needs—and had promised He would, if they would be generous. This passage we just read gives us also the secret: *FIRST give yourself to God, AND THEN* share what you have with those who are even worse off than you!

Hebrews 6:10-11 Apologetics Study Bible

For God is not unjust; *He will not forget your work* and the love you showed **for His name** when you served the saints—and you continue to serve them.

1 John 3:16-17

“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 *But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*”

4. **ANOTHER REASON we help the poor: We will be blessed and will reap in proportion to what we have sown. What kind of harvest will you and I receive?**

Psalm 41:1-2

“Blessed is he who considers the poor; Yahweh (the LORD) will deliver him in time of trouble. 2 Yahweh (the LORD) will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies.”

Proverbs 22:9

9 He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor.

The converse is also true. If we aren't generous, Yahweh takes note and keeps blessings from us.

Proverbs 28:27

*“He who gives to the poor will not lack,
But he who hides his eyes will have many curses”*

Proverbs 11:24-25 Apologetics Study Bible

“One person gives freely, yet gains more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor. 25 A generous person will be enriched, and the one who gives a drink of water will receive water.”

There are many ways to help the poor and NEEDY. We can help those we know personally, or we can also send money to Salvation Army and mark it on your check as aid for the tornado victims at Joplin, Missouri, for example. There are so many world disasters, but please – let's send something to help the absolutely needy. God's children are merciful and will always help those whose lives have been devastated by tornadoes, earthquakes or floods.

Be merciful, so when you need mercy – it will come to you (**Matt. 5:7**). We are to be like our Father, who is merciful (**Luke 6:36**). Sure, you have bills this month too, but compared to someone who has just been wiped out in a tornado....? Let's soften our hearts and help them. If I don't personally know someone directly affected in these huge natural disasters, I usually support Salvation Army because their leaders are not paid the astronomical salaries the leaders of Red Cross are. I want my money to go to help the poor and I have confidence Salvation Army will do that best.

Some of GOD'S LAWS concerning the Poor

5. **We're still continuing --WHY we need a sermon on the Poor: BECAUSE we need to be applying in our lives all of God's laws in regard to the poor. It has to do with being obedient.**

Here are a few of God's laws concerning the way we interact with the poor. Some of these laws are almost impossible to practice in this culture, in this society, with its laws – but in the coming Kingdom of God on earth, I expect we'll see many of these laws which have to do with the poor, all reinstituted. *Again and again, if you read Deut 28:1-11 for example, we see that if our nation*

would obey God's laws, He would extraordinarily bless our land to produce more and more, and He promises to keep away the diseases and natural disasters that plague other nations. We as a nation are *not* keeping His laws and so we see God's mantle of protection and blessing being removed.

Yahweh insists that we treat the poor kindly and with profound respect. After all, by now you see we are to treat the poor, as we would treat the Eternal God himself, with profound respect!

Exodus 22:25-27

25 "If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; **you shall not charge him interest.** 26 If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. 27 For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious."

The poor among us simply cannot afford to hire the expensive lawyers who can best defend them, as in OJ Simpson's trial. God is not partial to anyone – not the poor, not the rich.

Exodus 23:3

"You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute".

Exodus 23:6-8 Apologetics Study Bible

6 "You must not deny justice to the poor among you in his lawsuit. 7 Stay far away from a false accusation. Do not kill the innocent and the just, because I will not justify the guilty.

Law of the land rest in the 7th year

Exodus 23:10-11 Apologetics Study Bible

10 "Sow your land for six years and gather its produce. 11 But during the seventh year you are to let it rest and leave it uncultivated, so that *the poor among your people may eat* from it [what comes up naturally from your land; all land is really God's land] and the wild animals may consume what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove."

Be turning to Deut. 15. There would have been a built-in Godly redistribution of wealth – but not like socialist world governments today try to do. In God's way, you could plan for the impact of this and yes, there would be a significant hit to the wealthiest, but if followed, there would have been fewer poor people and landless/homeless people – and the wealthy could prepare for this hit.

Deuteronomy 15:1-6

"At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. 2 This is how to cancel debt: Every creditor is to cancel what he has lent his neighbor. He is not to collect anything from his neighbor or brother, because the Lord's release of debts has been proclaimed. 3 You may collect something from a foreigner, but you must forgive whatever your brother owes you.

4 "There will be no poor among you, however, because Yahweh is certain to bless you in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance— 5 if only you obey

the Lord your God and are careful to follow every one of these commands I am giving you today. 6 When the Lord your God blesses you as He has promised you, you will lend to many nations but not borrow; you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.”

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 APOLOGETICS Study Bible

7 “If there is a poor person among you, one of your brothers within any of your gates in the land the Lord your God is giving you, you must not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. 8 *Instead, you are to open your hand to him and freely loan him enough for whatever need he has.* 9 Be careful that there isn’t this wicked thought in your heart, ‘The seventh year, the year of canceling debts, is near,’ and you are stingy toward your poor brother and give him nothing. He will cry out to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty. 10 *Give to him, and don’t have a stingy heart when you give, and because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you do.* 11 For there will never cease to be poor people in the land; that is why I am commanding you, ‘You must willingly open your hand to your afflicted and poor brother in your land.’

Not reaping to the edges

Leviticus 19:9-10 (Apologetics Study Bible)

9 “When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap to the very edge of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 You must not strip your vineyard bare or gather its fallen grapes. Leave them for the poor and the foreign resident; I am the Lord (YHVH) your God.”

On some things, the poor had the same obligations as the rich – even on some financial issues.

Exodus 30:15

The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the Lord, to make atonement for yourselves.

Leviticus 19:15

15 'You shall do no injustice in judgment. *You shall not be partial to the poor*, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor [no matter who that neighbor is!]

Yahweh teaches us to be respectful of the poor, and to leave them their dignity.

Deuteronomy 24:10-15

10 "When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge. 11 You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you. 12 And if the man is poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight. 13 You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the Lord your God.

14 "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. 15 **Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor** and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you.

We are, again, to treat the very poor with as much dignity as we would the Christ himself. Certainly we should not give preferential treatment to the rich.

James 2:1-7

“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. 2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, 3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? 7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?”

Let’s recap. First of all, I hope this sermon will have stirred something in you to do something for someone you know could use \$50 from you. At least do something to encourage them.

So to recap, why we should help the poor:

1. The Kingdom of God is going to those who practice the Kingdom’s way of life, which includes respecting and caring for the poor. Helping the poor is the Kingdom’s way.
2. God takes personally the way we treat poor people. It’s as if He feels that’s the way we’re treating Him. If we don’t help, He feels we are not helping HIM. If we treat them with dignity or indignity – he feels it!
3. Helping the poor is what Jesus regularly did. We are to become more and more like Him and grow in his image. If we are, we should be helping the poor, because that’s what HE would be doing and did do. Even poor people can find others poorer than they are, and God will bless them.
4. We need to help someone poor because we will reap what we sow. When we send money to help the needy and poor, Yahweh promises to rain down blessings on us mightily in kind.
5. Because we want to be aware of, and follow God’s laws regarding the poor. We are called to obey the Eternal. He promises to bless us the more we walk in the way He has shown us (Deut 28:1-11).
 - a. Deut 15:8 – we are not to begrudge helping a poor neighbor, but **be generous**.
 - b. God’s way was to cancel all debts owed to you every 7 years. Imagine that!
 - c. We are not to charge interest to a poor brother.
 - d. We are to leave the land uncultivated the 7th year and let it lie fallow – but what grows of its own accord is for the poor and wild animals.
 - e. We are to treat the poor with dignity and respect. We are not to enter their homes to secure their pledges.

- f. We are not to overly glean our fruit trees but to leave some of the fruit for the poor.
- g. Justice should be equal and blind justice under the law – whether for the poor or rich. Someone who is guilty should be penalized, whether poor or rich.
- h. We are not to withhold the wages of someone poor but pay them promptly, even daily.

Most of all, our Father wants us to be generous with what *He's* given *us*. He wants us to share with those who are in need.

It's a nice thought. But now what? **I've found if I don't act on something right away, the urge to do anything dissipates pretty fast.** It's what James called looking at yourself in a mirror, seeing dirt, but not immediately removing it – and we forget. So I hope, today – right now – you will take out your check book and help someone you know really, really could use it.

There are other ways to help the poor as well. Hire a poor and unemployed person you know for day work now and again if you're too poor yourself to hire someone full time.

But in the end, remember God wants us to have soft hearts, not hard hearts. And what we do to the least of these his brethren, he considers it done unto him. And how we treat the poor – he takes personally. We have everything to gain, and nothing to lose, when we help the poor.

Until next time, your brother in the Messiah – this is Philip Shields, and we'll talk again soon. Hey, let me know if these are helping you. Let others know, if you feel these messages will help them too. Yahweh bless and keep you.