

Loving the Poor

Covenant Church
Sunday, February 3, 2019
Zack Phillips, Pastor

Matt 5:42 (NRSV)

Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

Matt. 5:38-48 (NRSV) “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Introduction

1. Our question: How does this seemingly misplaced verse fit in?
2. This sermon series in the life of our church: (1) meeting Jesus; (2) loving the poor; (3) doing justice

I. Different motivations for helping the poor

1. Different motivations in the Bible
2. The role of guilt? St. Basil the Great and Shaine Claiborne

St. Basil: How many could you have delivered from want with but a single ring from your finger? How many households fallen into destitution might you have raised? In just one of your closets there are enough clothes to cover an entire town shivering with cold.¹

St. Basil: Is not the person who strips another of clothing called a thief? And those who do not clothe the naked when they have the power to do so, should they not be called the same?²

Shaine Claiborne: I hope that you will find, as thousands of other folks have, that I don't like guilt very much. It can't be what moves us to change the world, or ourselves. Most good things begin with a little guilt, but they never end there. A friend of mine says, “Guilt can be a good indicator, but it is a terrible motivator.”³

¹ St Basil the Great, *On Social Justice* (Popular Patristics Series Book 38; St Vladimir's Seminary Press. Kindle Edition).

² St Basil the Great, *On Social Justice* (Popular Patristics Series Book 38; St Vladimir's Seminary Press. Kindle Edition).

³ Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical* (Updated and expanded; Zondervan, 2016), p. 32.

3. Motivation in our passage?

1 John 3:17 How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

III. "The Most Dangerous Thing You Will Do is Preach Love"

Narrative/concrete rather than abstract

IV. Loving the Poor

1. Acting *then* feeling?

C. S. Lewis: When you are not feeling particularly friendly but know you ought to be, the best thing you can do, very often, is to put on a friendly manner and behave as if you are a nicer person than you actually are. And in a few minutes, as we have all noticed, you will be feeling really friendlier than you were. Very often the only way to get a quality in reality is to start behaving as if you had it already.⁴

2. Towards empathy

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity: The Case for Christianity, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality* (Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Company, 1952 (orig. 1943): 160.