Jesus and the Poor

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EDITORIAL . . .

JESUS AND THE POOR

By Ron Allen

“The poor you will always have with you.” These oft-quoted words of Jesus are shown to be terribly true this Christmas time. The numbers of the world’s poor are growing at an exponential rate. Still well within the first decade of this 21st century, we face the fact that since last Christmas, 40 million people have died from starvation, disease and malnutrition. This is a number equal to four Native American Holocausta, or seven Jewish Holocausta. Out of the 100,000 to 150,000 who die every day around the world, 40,000 are children. In 1900, there were approximately 1 billion people inhabiting the earth, today there are well over 6 billion. China and India, the poor undeveloped nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America will continue to bear the brunt of starvation.

In addition to these poor nations, there is a growing multitude of disenfranchised living within the populations of the rich, developed countries. The number of these is expanding rapidly as they descend into a hopeless cycle of dependency, homelessness, poor nutrition and health. Jesus was right! The poor are here—and there are more of them than ever!

Who Are The Poor?

In Scripture, the poor are not merely those without money. They include the powerless, the defenseless, those who—for whatever reason—are unable to adequately take care of their own interests. They are open to exploitation by those more clever or powerful than they are.

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8, 9)

The biblical poor are those robbed of their rights. They are the ‘oppressed and afflicted’, the wretched of the earth. They include widows, aliens, orphans, the weak, and disadvantaged. Among their numbers are the despised and disreputable; those whose opinions are neither sought nor respected because no one cares what they think. They are neglected and limited. They are nobodies. They cannot reach their potential because a web of forces and influences far stronger than themselves conspire to hold them back.

The God of the Poor

In the Bible story, God is revealed as the God who comes to the aid of the poor. At the Exodus He comes to liberate His oppressed.

“I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.” (Exodus 3:7)

God’s action on behalf of the enslaved Israelites reveals something wonderful in His character. He likes to help the underdog. He notices and seeks out the small, the feeble, the alone and afraid. His election of Israel, and not some other people, illustrates this:

“The Lord did not set his affection on you because you

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Pastor Ron Allen

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Good News Unlimited is an interdenominational Christian organization proclaiming the good news about Jesus Christ and his kingdom of grace. Special emphasis is placed on the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ’s righteousness alone. GNU also links the gospel to the needs of the whole person, to life-style, and preventive medicine.

Good News Unlimited magazine is also seeks to keep readers up-to-date on all aspects of GNU’s ministries. This includes news on national and international radio broadcasts; public seminars, congresses, and Bible schools within the USA (as well as public meetings in Canada and overseas); and the dissemination of literature, audio and video material. (A comprehensive catalog is available free on request.)

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were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.” (Deuteronomy 7:7; Isaiah 60:22).

If God had chosen a strong, masterful and plentiful people, He would have been revealed as a different kind of God. For this reason, the covenant people were instructed not to forget that when God came to their aid, they were the weakest of the weak. (see Ezekiel 16:1-6)

The Year of the Lord’s Favor
In Isaiah 61, the Lord’s servant announces the jubilee to be ushered in by Messiah.

The Spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of the spirit of despair. (Isaiah 61:1-3)

According to Luke’s gospel, Jesus commenced his public evangelism in Galilee by reading this passage aloud, and applying it to himself. In his kingdom manifesto, he startled his audience by stating his unequivocal interest in those living on society’s scrap heap.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth...
Blessed are those who are persecuted...
Blessed are you when people insult you...” (Matthew 5:3-11)

When John the Baptist’s faith in Jesus was under threat, Jesus sent a message to his prison cell:

Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. (Matthew 11:4-6)

In other words: tell John that the God who hears the cry of the poor has arrived.

In the four gospels, Jesus displays an unmistakable sympathy and sensitivity to the plight of the poor. He is drawn to them. Some of the most memorable and precious words spoken by Jesus were directed to the bypassed and the forgotten. Tax collectors—hated by almost everyone—and prostitutes, felt safe and welcome in his presence. Lepers, the untouchables of those times, felt the touch of his hand. Little children and women, hindered and dismissed by many, heard his warm invitation and came to him.

The sick, the afflicted, the dying, the powerless, the outcast, the last, the least, the captive, the stranger, the decrepit, the sorrowing and the dying—these were all Christ’s poor and he went out of his way to identify with them.

Power and Wealth Not Honored
Jesus loved all men regardless of their social standing, but in the gospels—indeed in Scripture at large—there is a marked absence of the servile worship of wealth and power that is so common in our world. The founding of the Messianic kingdom is, for Jesus, a divesting of power and status in favor of weakness and vulnerability. “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing...” (Philippians 2:6, 7) “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Jesus’ birth was the beginning of a journey into poverty. He was born in a building where there were animals. Powerful forces were arrayed against Him immediately. His parents were obliged to escape with Him to Egypt. His first years were lived in exile from His homeland. He grew up like a tender shoot in a desert of hostility. As an adult, He had none of the material instruments of security that the world trusts—money, lands, arms. Foxes and birds were better housed than He was.

He came to be despised and rejected by His own people. He was familiar with sorrow; oppressed and afflicted. He was taken as lamb to the slaughter. He was in weakness, injustice, hunger, thirst, nakedness. There was no one to speak up for Him; no one to help Him. He was utterly alone. He was the essential poor man. Why? Because we are really all poor.

Wealth, power, and popularity do not really make us strong. On the cross, the truth about humanity is finally told. Without God we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. On the cross, the “Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” That is to say, He has become us. In Christ, God has sided with the poor by becoming one of them in order to bear their grief and carry their sorrows.

The Fellowship of the Poor
Whereas in the Old Testament, God’s action in delivering the helpless from Egyptian bondage was to remain the basis of Israel’s covenant relationship to Him, so in the gospel, God’s act of deliverance at Calvary is to remain forever the theme of Christian experience. We are always poor, but God is always gracious.

Only the soul saved by grace knows just how much he has in common with the disadvantaged of the earth. The only way to truly celebrate our privilege as God’s redeemed, is to enact God’s predilection for the wretched of the earth and to ease their lot.

Christ is in absolute solidarity with the poor. The individual who claims to be one of his followers, but whose religious interests are confined to ‘hearing’ the gospel without ‘doing’ it, will not have discovered the intimacy with God indicated by these words of Jesus:

“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.” (Matthew 25:35, 36)
During this holiday season, Christians and Jews celebrate two holidays together: Christmas and Hanukkah. There are Jews who observe Christmas, Christians who observe Hanukkah, and some of both faiths observe both holidays. The Christmas story (Luke 2) is well known by the world, but the story of Hanukkah remains unknown to the world in general. The spiritual implications of this day of dedication are quite amazing. The word Hanukkah is the Hebrew word for “dedication.” This holiday commemorates the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem in 165 B.C. Christmas is celebrated with lights, and during this time of dedication candles are lit for eight consecutive days to remember the eight days of the Miracle of Lights.

Of all the feast days in Leviticus, there is no command to observe Hanukkah. An interesting thing to think about is that this holiday is mentioned in scripture and we find Christ right in the middle of this observance:

Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon’s Colonnade (John 10:22-23).

If we believe that all scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16), what can we learn by looking into the actions of our Messiah and asking ourselves, “Why was He at the temple at this time?”

The people are talking, the children are singing and the smell of food is in the air. People are gathered here and there in small groups and the place is lit up with excitement as the people are in a state of celebration and rejoicing as they contemplate their love for the temple. Christ is walking around and listening to the conversations and probably hearing something like this:

After the days of Alexander the Great, a sinful root rose up named Antiochus Epiphanes. He began to rule in the 137th year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

In those days, sinful men came forth from Israel and desired to mislead many by drawing them away from the spiritual faith of the fathers; they abandoned the holy covenant and sold themselves to do evil. At this time Antiochus Epiphanes determined to become king of Egypt. He invaded with chariots, cavalry, elephants and a large fleet force. He captured Egypt and plundered the land. After subduing Egypt, he returned and attacked Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He arrogantly entered the Temple and took the Menorah (lampstand), the table of showbread, the curtains, the crowns, and all the utensils. He also took silver, gold and whatever hidden treasure he found. He committed murder, left the temple in ruins and the people in a state of lamentation. Jerusalem and the temple lay in ruins!

Two years later the King sent a chief collector to Jerusalem. He spoke kindly, but he fell upon the city and set up strongholds. He seized everything from women and children to cattle. They fortified the city and it became their evil citadel. All the things that the children of Israel held dear were now desecrated. The king ordered everyone to give up their customs. All the commands of Israel were forbidden and swine were now offered as a sacrifice in the temple. The people were to make an effort to make themselves abominable by defying the commands of the God of Israel, to do away with the law and all the ordinances. Whoever refused must die. The true children of Israel went into hiding in every place of refuge they had.

Mattathias Maccabee was a prominent leader among the children of Israel. When the king’s officers came to Modein, they tried to make Mattathias join in the commands of the king, but Mattathias refused. At this time, a Jew came forward to offer the evil sacrifice of the king, but Mattathias killed him, tore down the altar and called for a rebellion against the king. He led a group of people who were zealous for the law and the covenant. Thus he echoed the zeal of Phinehas as he rebelled against wickedness (Numbers 25:6-13).
the Sabbath. One thousand children of Israel, whole families, died that Sabbath day as they were attacked by the king’s forces. Mattathias quickly rose up and declared that the children of Israel would fight on the Sabbath, and then organized a huge army and went to attack sinful men, tearing down altars and forcibly circumcising all the young boys of Israel. They rescued the law and put arrogant men to death.

Mattathias died and he placed his son Judas in charge. Judas Maccabee, from the tribe of Judah, was a giant of a man. When he put on his breastplate, he was like a lion in his deeds, like a lion roaring for prey. He searched out and pursued the lawless, men shrank back for fear of him and evildoers were confounded. He was renowned to the ends of the earth and he gathered in those who were perishing.

The Miracle of Light

After three years of fighting, the Jews defeated the Greek army despite having fewer men and weapons. Judas Maccabee and his troops marched into Jerusalem in 165 B.C. and into the temple. They were grieved at the destruction. They began to repair the temple. Upon the quick restoration of the temple, the Maccabees wanted to light the menorah, but they only found one flask of oil: enough to burn for one day. Upon using the oil and lighting the menorah, the oil for one day burned for eight days. This gave the Maccabees time to make more oil, for it took eight days to make temple quality oil to burn in the menorah. The temple was restored, the light was re-lit and the temple was now dedicated. The performance of the “Hanukkah” was now complete. The people rejoiced as this miracle took place, and their faith revived as the Spirit returned to the temple.

Now we ask ourselves, “What in the world does this have to do with me and my faith?” The story of Christmas speaks of the One who “came”, and the story of Hanukkah speaks of what this One “did.”

As Christ walked around the temple that day (John 10:22-23) I wonder what He was thinking. Was He saddened at the fact that the people had no idea that it was in fact “themselves” that were the true temple? Did He already long for the day that Rab Sha’ul (Apostle Paul) would declare to the people that they were the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3 and 6)? Did He long for the date that He knew Paul would receive this revelation? Was His heart burning for the day when His people would understand? Their hero at this time was Judas Maccabee, from the tribe of Judah. As the people celebrated within the temple that day, they had no idea that the Lion From the Tribe of Judah was amongst them (Revelation 5:5). One greater than Judas Maccabee! As the menorah was lit, I am sure that Christ’s heart burned with the desire for the people to know that it was Him that was the True Light of the world (John 9:5). As Judas poured the oil into the menorah, it would be Christ that would pour the oil of joy into us (Isaiah 61:3). Not only that, but as the temple illuminated the people, it would also be His people someday that would illumine the world (Ephesians 5:8). The true wick was not the one in the menorah, but in the soul of man (Proverbs 20:27). When would the people see that it was truly Him that came to cleanse the temple of man? To clean out the sin and every unclean thing that dwelt within? When would they see Christ as a warrior? When would the people allow Him to relight the flame within them, and to dedicate them to His Father? His desire within His heart was the “Hanukkah” of His people!

Has Christ waged a war for you and redeemed you from the powers of darkness? Did He march into your temple, put you back together and light the fire within you with the oil of joy? Are you dedicated? This Christmas rejoice that the Babe was given, born of a virgin. At the same time, rejoice that this Babe would grow to be our Redeemer, the One to wage war, restore the temple of man, pour the oil, and relight the fire of relationship and dedicate us to the Father.

And after Yohanan (John) was delivered up, Yeshua (Jesus) came to Galil, proclaiming the Good News of the reign of Elohim, and saying, “The time has been filled, and the reign of Elohim has come near. Repent, and believe the Good News (Mark 1:14-15, The Scriptures).”

DID YOU KNOW?

Esther 8:9 is the longest verse in the Bible.
Asheville, North Carolina Seminar

Asheville, North Carolina

GNU would like to thank everyone that came out to the Asheville, North Carolina seminar. We would like to thank you for your encouraging words and your hospitality. May you continue to grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52).

Thelma Gilbert

Thelma Gilbert is from Berrien Springs, Michigan. Thelma drives this distance to come to the GNU seminars. During the Spring 2005 seminar in North Carolina, Thelma drove through a blizzard to get there. Thank you Thelma for the amazing encouragement that you bring to GNU!

Jack Sellards

Father of Associate Pastor Jason Sellards, Gideon Jack Sellards was at the North Carolina seminar. Jack spoke briefly about the Gideons, and gave a short personal testimony. The GNU audience at the seminar was then blessed as Jack handed out Gideon pocket testaments to everyone. We would like to say “thank you” to the Gideons for their faithful work in the distribution of the gospel.

Gideons

The Gideons International serves as an extended missionary arm of the church: Our sole purpose is to win men, women, boys and girls to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through association for service, personal testimony, and distributing the Bible in the human traffic lanes and streams of everyday life.

Would you like to be involved with helping the Gideons take the Gospel to the world? You can reach them with the following information:

Gideons International
P.O. Box 140800 • Nashville, TN  37214-0800
Or log onto their website www.gideons.org
We have been looking at the Lord’s Prayer as recorded in Matthew 6:5-13. Jesus says: “Our Father in heaven...”

When God came to earth to reveal himself to us He didn’t choose to be known as a God who hurls lightning bolts, or as a God who makes the earth and the mountains tremble, but rather as ‘Our Father.’ The best expression of His relationship with us is a loving father.

I was six years old when my father returned in a hospital ship after four years in the army, in Egypt and Italy. Prior to going off to the Second World War he grew up in a non-church-going family, and was totally irreligious. A military chaplain changed all that. On returning to his home in New Zealand, Dad was offered a job as manager of a hotel. He turned it down because, as he said, “A hotel is no place to bring up kids.” Instead we moved into the country and he took us to Sunday School and church, and it was there that I committed my life to the Lord Jesus. I owe a lot to my father. He was a good hard-working man who cared for me, nurtured me, and sacrificed a lot for my sake. I miss him and look forward to seeing him again in the resurrection of the just.

A few years ago an experiment was done with two young lambs; they were in a pen with pads on the ground that could be electrified with the throw of a switch. The first lamb was put in the pen by itself, and every so often the researcher would give it an electric shock. Eventually the poor lamb became a shivering wreck frozen on the spot afraid to move. The second lamb was placed in the pen with its mother also tethered inside. This lamb was given the same treatment as the first, but each time it received a shock it would flee to its mother who would reassure it. This lamb—unlike the first—would go out to explore again without fear. The parent’s presence made all the difference.

God is our loving Father and he cares for us. The Bible says, “Cast all your anxiety upon him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Knowing that he is there watching over us enables us to do things that would stop others in their tracks. There have been times when I have carried burdens that were just too great for my humanity to bear, and if God had not been there for me I would have collapsed under them. With considerable emotion I recall how the Lord carried me through some very dark hours. He was a father who was there when I most needed him. He knew my weakness; that I was but dust. I expect that you have had a similar experience. It is good to know that “just as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.”

No other god is like our God. There is no father as compassionate and caring, as supportive and encouraging, as kind and generous, as forgiving and merciful as our Father in heaven. At any time of the day or night we can come boldly into his presence with our praise and petitions. He is our Father, our Abba, or Dad.
The Riddle of Christmas

By Desmond Ford

Riddles usually belong to fun issues, but some belong to issues of life and death. You will remember that Samson set forth a riddle that had very serious consequences (Judges 14). The Greeks told about a monster that guarded Thebes. He demanded of all who approached the city either their life or the answer to the puzzle: What is it that has four feet, two feet, and is weakest when it has three feet?

You have probably heard the answer. Man, who first crawls on all fours, later walks on two feet and is weakest when ultimately he is reduced to using a walking stick.

I think Samson’s riddle was better, for a Christian can find the gospel there. “Out of the eater came forth meat, out of the strong, came forth sweetness.” Honey had been found by Samson in the carcass of the lion he slew, and he had strengthened himself on his journey by eating it. Similarly, after our Samson overcame the Tempter in the wilderness, he fed on heavenly food (see Matthew 4:11).

By the grace of God, all the church’s conflicts with the devil yield ultimate sweetness. How appropriate for those who follow Christ, who plucked life from death and gained from the cross, where He has made us partakers of His victory.

Also it has been pointed out that the ancient creeds of the church were the result of the assaults of false teachers ultimately overthrown by the church. Truth can be the honey from the carcass of heresy. It is also true that there is no Christian who cannot derive spiritual food from those things that test his faith and courage, and threaten to destroy him.

But Christmas brings yet another riddle. Why did Bethlehem become the birthplace of Jesus, and not the great capital Jerusalem? Why did the manger of the lowly animals shelter Him, and not the comfortable inn? Why did the angels sing to poor shepherds and not the religious leaders of Israel? Why? This riddle is also related to the issues of life and death.

Do not spoil the parallels of the riddle by asking whether the wise men from the East were not exceptions to the rule proposed. For they too were poor, as far as the riches of revelation were concerned. They belonged to the heathen and not the chosen people.

Of course it is not hard to see some partial answers to the riddle. Though Jerusalem was called the city of David, actually Bethlehem had been his birthplace. Now the Son of David came, who was to be the Great Shepherd of His people. It was appropriate that He should be born where the shepherd David first found life. Bethlehem means “house of bread.” What better name for the original home of the real bread for starving sinners.

We can also say about the manger that it was the place where sacrificial animals were kept, and now the true sacrifice for the sins of the world had come. Furthermore, the shepherds abiding in the fields outside the shelter of the town remind us of the patriarchs who were all shepherds. From among such, Moses and David were called.

But the best answer to the riddle transcends all of the above. Observe first that He who is called the Everlasting Father in Isaiah 9:6, became a child of time in Bethlehem. The One pictured as the Ancient of Days in Revelation 1:14 is but an infant; a span in length that first Christmas. What infinite condescension! What humility!

Thou camest a little baby thing
That made a woman cry
Our God contracted to a span
Incomprehensibly made man.

The humility of God! He asks nothing of us that He has not performed. Mary saw the answer to the riddle clearly, and put it to music:

He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree.
He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away. (Luke 1:51-53)

Jesus was ever presenting the same glorious message. When the disciples of John came to enquire whether he was the true Messiah, His answer was:

Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk. Lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he that takes no offence at me. (Matthew 11:4-6)
Had John the Baptist forgotten the words of Christ’s ordination sermon?—“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3,6) Had John forgotten the message of the book of Judges? Every deliverer in that book glorified God either by his or her own inadequacy or by the inadequacy of the weapons used.

We are told by Luke that there was no room for the Christ-child or His guardians at the inn. Has it not always been thus? The privileged see no beauty in Christ. The masses reject their only hope. Worldlings, though outwardly religious, look for what is adorned by glamorous tinsel and announced by the blowing of trumpets.

Insight into the riddle of Christmas, the paradox of eternity entering time, lightens life’s other mysteries. We learn to see mercy in misery, life in death, and gain in the loss of all things. We see that there must first be the bruised before the glorified body; the cross before the crown. Paul understood the riddle and wrote about the servants of Christ:

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

But most of all, the answer to the riddle of Christmas is exemplified in the way of personal salvation. The lowly creatures see God in the flesh; the shepherds see and hear the angels. Those who know themselves, who know they deserve death and hell, who bow low in humble contrition and adoring love, these are elevated to glory, even the glory of righteousness and everlasting life.

But be careful! Too many become drunk at Christmas. Some are drunk who never drink. An unwise believer can become spiritually drunk. Remember the man who at last achieved humility? He became happy at his humility. But then he was sorry he was happy at his humility. Lastly he became happy that he was sorry about his happiness at his humility. What a vicious circle to escape from if one focuses on self instead of Christ. True humility is the possession only of those who know their own poverty.

Even Old Testament saints were reminded that “in the Lord alone” was their righteousness and strength. Paul tells us that Christ is “made unto us righteousness.”

And now you have the answer to the riddle of Christmas—God gives Himself to the poor, the needy, to those who know they are dying without hope, He looks down in mercy and grace upon them. To such belongs the kingdom of heaven; such will be satisfied, even though in this life they will never graduate from the ranks of poor sinners who ever hunger and thirst for the continued righteousness of God.

(Reprinted from Good News Unlimited, December 1983)

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HOW MANY ARE THE POOR?

Each year at least 40 million die from starvation, disease and malnutrition.

1.3 billion people, 20% of the world’s population, struggle to survive on less than $1.00 per day.

3 billion people, 50% of the world’s population, struggle to survive on $2.00 per day.

The seven largest economies of the world—the U.S., Germany, Japan, France, Italy and the United Kingdom—which make up less than the 12% of the world’s population—consume 43% of the world’s fossil fuels and 64% of the world’s paper.

59% of people living in poverty are women.

Europeans spend $11 billion a year on ice cream—$2 billion more than the estimated annual total needed to provide clean water and safe sewers to the vast majority of the world’s population.

The world’s richest nations are home to more than 100 million people who now live below the poverty line.

In 1976 the wealthiest 1% of Americans owned 19% of all private material wealth in the U.S. Today, they own over 40%. Their wealth exceeds that owned by the bottom 92% of the U.S.

The top 20% of people living in high-income countries consume 86% of all the world’s goods and services. The poorest 20% consume 1.3%.

(Taken from www.civilocracy.org)
In the heart of Sacramento, California, is a pillar of hope for ministries and the needy in one location. The Capital City Dream Center is pastored by Darryl and Trina Sandford. Located at 1516 C St, the Dream Center is in the business of helping ministers make their dreams come true, and is an outpost of hope for the broken who may have lost their dreams for a season.

Darryl Sandford is from Edmonton, Canada. He was introduced to ministry in 1983 through Y.W.A.M. (Youth With A Mission). Knowing that his life needed to change, he joined this mission organization before he was a believer, and it was through this organization that he came to his faith.

In 1991 Darryl founded the Victory Church of Three Hills in Three Hills, Alberta Canada. He immersed himself in discipleship training and was involved with a school of evangelism. He met his wife Trina on the mission field as they both traveled to Mexico with Y.W.A.M. for disaster relief.

Darryl was responsible for starting a Christian television station in Canada. As the station began to spring up, the government came in to shut them down. Darryl said that it was like the movies, “Guys pulled up in black vehicles, wore black suits and barged into our offices and confiscated our equipment! I never did get that equipment back.” Darryl’s persistence, along with his circle of support, fought back and won the right to have their television station, which aired rebroadcasts of T.B.N. (Trinity Broadcasting Network). T.B.N. paid the costs of lawyers and all court fees. A difference was made in Canada as the gospel went forth due to Darryl’s persistence and obedience.

In 1995, Darryl and his family moved to Oak Park, California. He quickly became involved as a teacher in an inner city outreach where he worked in a school for truant children. These children were truant due to their poor home lives; parents were drug addicts, prostitutes and were not there for the children. At this time Darryl started an ATM business, which is his financial income to this date. He works in ministry with no salary to this date.

As the former pastor’s wife of the Neighborhood Outreach Church was suffering with medical issues, the building was shut down, boarded up and fell apart. This was unfortunate, as the church was a major outreach center for the children in the area. This building was offered to Darryl and it is this building that has become the Capital City Dream Center. Darryl has put much work into this building, and has provided many repairs.

Darryl believes in giving various ministries their opportunities of a life time. Ministries that operate out of the Dream Center are “allowed to breathe” and pursue their visions. Darryl says that the Dream Center is an emergency ward / trauma center for the broken to receive ministry and the hope of the gospel. Adopt-A-Block community clean-up, Anger Management, a discipleship training center and various other counseling outlets are on the move here at the Dream Center. The Dream Center is also home to M.A.N.N.A. Outreach, and it is Darryl that has blessed GNU with its first food ministry opportunities by offering his church building and services to us.

“I want to see Dream Centers opened all over the world”, says Darryl. We need more ministers of the gospel like Darryl and Trina Sandford: ministers that dare to take the gospel into dark places and minister to the broken. Thank you, Darryl and Trina, for your faithfulness and your obedience to the Father and His Kingdom. Thank you for making a difference!

Contact Info: Capital City Dream Center
1516 C St., Sacramento, Ca 95814
www.streetsforchrist.com • (916) 448-3733
pastor@streetsforchrist.com

Thank you
GNU would like to thank Pastor Darryl and Trina Sandford for the blessing of GNU’s first food ministry. Thank you for helping us be a light to our community as we carry the Gospel message to those in need.
TO and FRO with the Editor

Question:
Why are you people not proper Seventh-Day Adventists? J.M.

Answer:
Your question assumes that GNU seeks to represent or speak for Seventh-Day Adventism. This is not the case. Being a Seventh Day Adventist is not a prerequisite for employment at GNU; though being a Christian is. What we hope to do at Good News Unlimited is draw attention to Jesus. His attractions are considerable, and his Spirit is well equipped to enable folks to make their own response to him within the freedom that His grace provides. Along with yourself, GNU is striving to be faithful to God’s calling in Jesus Christ. May God Bless you.

Question:
Do angels sing? M.L.

Answer:
I am not aware of ever having seen or met an angel, and therefore am unable to pass an opinion based on firsthand evidence. But if you are asking me what the Bible indicates, I refer you to Revelation 5:11, 12 which clearly pictures angels singing.

Question:
I heard a statement on your radio program in which the speaker said that since the first advent of Christ, not national Israel, but those who accept Him, no matter what their nationality, are His chosen people. Is this view based on any particular Scriptures? G.P.

Answer:
Yes. The Christians who produced the New Testament (nearly all of them were Jews) seem to have believed that Jesus was the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets; indeed the entire history of Israel. They saw that what the descendants of Jacob failed to do, was achieved absolutely by Jesus of Nazareth. Henceforth, all who were united to him in faith were the Israel of God. The promises made to Abraham would be fulfilled in the church. Here are some Scriptures to think on:

Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. (Matthew 21:43)

Peter, writing to the church: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 3:6)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. (Romans 2:28, 29)

These verses show that the early church did not believe that Jewish-ness or non-Jewish-ness was an issue for personal destiny. Jews and Gentiles had both been gathered into the covenant on the equal basis of faith in Christ, sharing the same privileges that once belonged only to the nation of Israel. Jesus Christ, and not the Jewish state, lies at the centre of God’s plan of Salvation. God’s method is grace: a secondary tier of privilege based on ethnicity is not allowed.

Any Room for Jesus?

Is there room in your home for the outcast family?
Is there room in your heart for the lonely one?
Is there room at your table for the hungry one?
Well, come in Jesus child. We want to make you some room.
Is there room in this city for the lowly and the poor?
Is there room in this city for the homeless and their friends?
Is there room in this life for the broken little ones?
Well, come in Jesus child. We want to make you some room.

~David McKeithen. Quoted in Jim Wallis. A call to Conversion, p. 54
JESUS AND THE POOR

Introduction:
It was in 1884 that a young surgeon, Frederick Treves, first discovered the “Elephant Man.” He saw his enormous misshapen head with its huge bony mass protruding from his brow. There was another bony prominence jutting out from his jaw which made him look something like an elephant. Treves described him as the most disgusting specimen of humanity he had ever seen.

His skin was spongy and foul-smelling. His flesh hung in bags from his back and chest. His legs were deformed, his feet were bulbous, his hip diseased. His speech was spluttering and scarcely intelligible. The only persons to take any interest in him were a gawking public who paid two pence to see him. His face wore no expression. He was treated worse than a dog and would find the darkest corner of any space to hide in.

His name was Joseph Merrick. When at length he was abandoned by the circus, Treves found a room for him in the back of a London hospital. There Treves discovered that Merrick was a human being, still in his twenties, intelligent, bookish, with a passion for conversation.

When the first woman came to visit Joseph and smiled at him as she shook his hand, he broke down into uncontrollable sobbing. He was really a gentle, affectionate and lovable person.

The Divine Pattern

God wants to be known and remembered as the liberator of the oppressed.

Read: Exodus: 20:2; Deuteronomy 5: 6; 26:5-8

Read: Jeremiah 5:26-29; Proverbs 14:31

• What does God think of those who take advantage of their weaker fellows?

Read: 1 Samuel 2:4-8; Luke 1:46-53

• Does God love the poor more than the rich?

• Why does Scripture regularly show God reversing the fortunes of the rich in favor of the poor? Compare Amos 6:4,7; Isaiah 3:14,15

Jesus’ Response to the Unlovely and the Friendless


• How were people of Zacchaeus’ profession regarded?

• How would Jesus respond to the elephant man?

The Believer’s Duty

God cares so much about the weak and the vulnerable, so it should not surprise us that He intends His people to imitate Him in this aspect of His character.


Read: Isaiah 1:12-17

• What does God think of religion that ignores the plight of the most needy? Compare Matthew 19:16-22

Failure to Care

Read: Luke 16:19-26

• What lessons does Jesus teach in this parable?

Note: We are not told that the rich man persecuted the beggar at his gate. All we learn is that the rich man lived in luxury while another man nearby had barely enough to eat. The picture is that of someone who simply failed to love enough. He was in a position to do something about the beggar’s plight and he did not. Though he was probably well respected by his peers, he did not share God’s interest in the poor. He had nothing in common with God; so the beggar went to paradise; not him!

November Magazine Correction

The incarceration dates for Daniel Robinson in Making A Difference were incorrect. The dates were September 1993, through October 1996.
GNU Activity Update

Wednesday Night Bible Studies
Our Wednesday night Bible studies continue to be a great time of fellowship as we look into the Word. Come and join us every Wednesday night at 7:00 p.m. at our Auburn, California office.

GNU and M.A.N.N.A. Outreach
The message of GNU continues to penetrate the darkness as the magazine goes to the broken and hurting through M.A.N.N.A. Outreach. To this date, six people have been blessed as GNU and M.A.N.N.A. aid in the transition of helping people get off the streets.

David and Carol Jordan
“My husband and I enjoy the opportunity to fellowship with the loving people that come to the Wednesday study, as our life is spiritually and emotionally enriched. We have been involved with GNU since 1999, and we find the new growth of GNU fantastic!”

Jessica Hoppis
Jessica Hoppis is 18 and from Grass Valley, California. Jessica used to be homeless on the streets and knows firsthand the importance of ministry to those who are in need. Jessica is grateful for M.A.N.N.A. Outreach as it makes a way for her to serve and give back to those in need. Jessica enjoys handing out the GNU magazine, because it gives her the avenue to have one-on-one communication with the recipient of the magazine. She would like to see the work of GNU and M.A.N.N.A. go everywhere.

Don Strauss
Don Strauss is from Racine, Wisconsin. Don is familiar with the lifestyle of being on the street. Through M.A.N.N.A. Outreach Don is now able to give back, as he ministers on the streets to those who are in need. Don is always volunteering his time to help GNU. Don helps with GNU’s food ministry, and he is one of the people responsible for the candy gift-bags that we have presented to the seminar attendees. Don says, “It is good for the body of Christ to be reaching out, and not just playing church. Through GNU and M.A.N.N.A., the body of Christ is truly showing itself alive to a hurting world.” Don is an inspiration to GNU as he brings a breath of fresh air into the ministry.

The GNU Food Ministry. Our food ministry continues to be an exciting outreach to the community. We are donating to various causes and we want to say thank you for your support as GNU continues to grow to be a blessing!
Please pray for the upcoming Spring 2006 Bible seminars. Pray for wisdom to be granted to teach the book of Exodus.

Jason

Pray for my husband Chuck for healing and for our finances as he is unable to work and we have a household of nine people.

Kim

Pray for the physical comfort of Harold who is experiencing a degenerative nerve disorder. Also pray for my fiancé Lourie that she would get a better place to live.

Jon

Pray for my daughter and my grand daughter that right decisions would be made in their lives.

Don

Pray for Daniel Robinson as he continues his ministry endeavors.

Jason

Pray for a spiritual awakening for my mother Pat.

Robert

My father is dying and I would like prayer for the strength of our family.

Brian

Pray for my husband Chuck for healing and for our finances as he is unable to work and we have a household of nine people.

Kim

Pray for the upcoming Spring 2006 Bible seminars. Pray for wisdom to be granted to teach the book of Exodus.

Jason

God in heaven, let me really feel my nothingness. Not in order to despair over it, but in order to feel more powerfully the greatness of thy goodness. -Kierkegaard
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GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED
Message of the Month

Even though life in the 21st century is fast-paced and intense, there are frequently small pockets of time during every day when you can listen to radio or some other ‘player’ while you are doing something else—such as driving, taking a lunch-break, or waiting for an appointment.

What better way to occupy your mind during these interludes, than by listening to an expository message by one or more of GNU’s evangelists and Bible teachers—Desmond Ford, Ron Allen, Jason Sellards.

GNU’s Message of the Month is always grace-centered, Christ-centered, inspired, and motivating.

For a donation of $80.00, receive two messages per month on your choice of tape or CD. Subscribe now and get the benefits and the joy of the GNU Message of the Month.
SPRING 2006 BIBLE SEMINAR

EXODUS — LET MY PEOPLE GO!

Around 1300 B.C. the descendants of Jacob were a disliked minority living in the land of Egypt, and feared because their numbers were increasing. Drastic measures were taken by Rameses II to cut their numbers and break their spirit. Able-bodied men were taken from their fields and pressed into slave labor on Pharoah’s massive building projects. A decree went out that all male infants born to Hebrew women were to be thrown into the Nile at birth. It was a policy of extermination that was to be repeated against the Jews by the Nazis. Both attempts failed. In the providence of God, Hitler was defeated in war and Rameses failed on account of the direct intervention of God on behalf of the children of Israel.

In 2006, many, like the Israelites in Egypt, are in the grip of forces beyond their control—economic turmoil, political unrest, and violent forces such as those practiced by terrorists. Individual lives matter little, while more and more people feel that they are drifting helplessly without anchor and there is nothing anyone can do about it. For this reason the book of Exodus remains intensely relevant for us today.

Watch for more information on the Spring 2006 Bible Seminar in the following issues of the Good News Unlimited magazine.