

Poverty and Injustice

Welcome What is your favourite time during a normal week?

Worship Songs about justice, about God's love, about the state of the world.
Here is love vast as the ocean; Immortal invisible; Oh Lord the clouds are gathering;

Witness “Small things done with great love can change the world”¹. What small thing can you do to show people that God loves them?

Word

Mat 25:34-40 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. (35) 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, (36) 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.' (37) Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? (38) When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? (39) When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' (40) **The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'**

Heb 13:11-16 The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. (12) And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. (13) **Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.** (14) For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. (15) Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name. (16) And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. – **Is this necessary?**

Notes and questions on the passages

A great challenge to Christians in the western church of today is to have eyes to see the poverty and injustices around them. In some areas poverty can be quite hidden.

Question: Do you think that there are people living in our community who are in any sense 'outside the camp'?

What people in our community are living on the edge of poverty?

Question: How do you think God feels about the poor and marginalised?

Question: Can you recall any incidence in your life where you could think afterwards you have 'met' Jesus in another person?

Isa 58:5-12 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

(6) Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: **to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? (7) Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter--when you see the naked, to clothe him,** and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? (8) Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. (9) Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, (10) and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. (11) The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. (12) Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

Question: What additional ideas does this passage add to the discussion about needs in society. How does it apply to us in the Village and in the nation as a whole?

Question: What do you think it could mean to us where it says “bearing the disgrace he bore”?

Question: If Christianity was illegal in this country and our Church was collectively brought to court, based on the Matthew passage (above), would there be sufficient evidence to convict us?

Jam 2:14-17 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? (15) Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. (16) If one of you says to him, Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? (17) In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Question: What ways are there of making our faith more practical, to work out our faith in more visible ways?

If you have extra time read some of the scriptures given at the end and discuss what you think the overall message here is.

Work

1. **Work out how you as a cell / home group can be involved practically in helping someone – perhaps with a Besom project. (What gifts and talents do you have?)**