

Theme: We are called by God's Law to show mercy to the poor and vulnerable because they are the image of God, and He promises to bless those who obey this call.

## I. Intro - Winter Relief

- A. Winter Relief at BRCC begins tomorrow
- B. This is a major effort for us each year
- C. We also have a lot of other way we work to serve the poor and vulnerable in our area
- D. Why does BRCC engage in this? Is it biblical?

## II. The Basis for Mercy Ministry

- A. How we treat others is how we treat God Himself
  - He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done. Proverbs 19:17
  - 1. To be kind to the poor is to lend to the Lord Himself
  - 2. God treats our actions towards the vulnerable as if they were done towards Him
  - 3. This is especially true of our treatment of the poor, the vulnerable, the outcast by society
  - 4. How a person, a family, a church, and a nation treats the most vulnerable and outcast reveals how they view and treat God
  - 5. This principle is reiterated by Jesus Himself
    - “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.’...<sup>45</sup> “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ Matthew 25:40, 45

- a. From Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats
  - b. Both had thought their treatment of people was distinct from their treatment of Jesus - but He says they were wrong
  - c. How they treated the most vulnerable - poor, hungry, sick, and imprisoned - was how they treated Jesus Himself
6. This is because of the Imago Dei - the image of God
- a. Every human being is the very image of God - and thus of incredible worth
  - b. When we mistreat or simply ignore the vulnerable - poor, outcast, sick, despised ethnic or religious groups - we are showing contempt for the image of God
- B. Kindness to the poor is a major part of God's Law
    - 1. The poor had to be given proper wages each day
      - Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. <sup>15</sup> Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin. Deuteronomy 24:14–15
      - a. The poor - Israeli or foreigner - must not be taken advantage of by God's people
      - b. They had to be given their proper wage each day
      - c. If the poor were mistreated it was sin before Yahweh
      - d. The prophets railed against violations of this law

2. Crops had to be left for the poor to harvest

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup> Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:9–10

- a. You were not allowed to glean to edge, or go over field twice
- b. The OT law against harvesting twice to the edge of the field is the opposite of our modern quest to squeeze out every drop! But our industrial efficiency creates spiritual and material poverty.
- c. The reason - to leave crops for the poor and the immigrant to be cared for
- d. I AM the Lord your God - hear O Israel!

3. Sabbath year to let land rest, care for poor, animals

For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, <sup>11</sup> but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove. Exod 23:10–11

- a. Six years - harvest as noted above to care for poor
- b. Seventh year - no regular planting and harvesting
- c. This let the poor get bounty, the animals get easy food, and the land rest
- d. It also put the wealthy and the poor on equal footing to get food that year

4. Sabbath year to release and bless slaves

If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free. <sup>13</sup> And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. <sup>14</sup> Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. Deuteronomy 15:12–14

- a. Israelite slaves only to be kept six years then freed
- b. When they were released - send them away full
- c. Give to them liberally - as God has given to you

5. This all culminated in the year of Jubilee (Lev 25)

- a. Jubilee is the culmination of the whole Sabbath system which was intended in part to care for the poor
- b. In Jubilee slaves are set free, debts forgiven, and land is returned to original families. It was a stop against generational poverty and enslavement.

C. Jesus is the Incarnation and fulfillment of all of this

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”  
<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, <sup>21</sup> and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Luke 4:18–21

1. When Jesus stands and proclaims these words, He says He is their fulfillment

2. Jesus is our Sabbath, our Jubilee - sin and debt forgiven, slaves set free, the poor cared for! So we can now extend Sabbath and Jubilee in His name to others!

### III. The Results of Mercy Ministry

- A. God cares for those who care for the poor and needy  
He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and **he will reward him for what he has done.** Proverbs 19:17

1. God promises to reward those who care for the poor
2. God does not help those who help themselves - He helps those who help others!  
Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble. Psalms 41:1

A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. Proverbs 11:25

He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy. Proverbs 14:21

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver...

<sup>11</sup> You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, 11

3. This includes God blessing us financially, and in every other way - lives full of grace, mercy, and peace

4. If you want to live a life awash in the mercy and blessing of God, then live a life devoted to being kind to the vulnerable - and God will graciously reward you.

- B. Our actions lead to God being praised

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

1. Good works often open the eyes of the world to the truth of the Gospel and the mercy of God - our ultimate hope
2. Even if people do not become believers, it leads to the praise of God for the good conduct of His people (1 Peter 2:12)
3. At a bare minimum, people will praise God on judgement Day for the good works that believers did

### IV. Applying the Word

- A. Thanks - Deacons, small groups, Grace and WR

1. I want to begin applying the word by saying thanks!
2. Paul did this when people had followed Scripture, so it is appropriate to apply the Word this way!
3. I want to thank BRCC for being willing to serve and care for the poor and vulnerable here and around the world
4. I especially want to thank our deacons who lead this effort - Karen, Renee, Patrick, Theresa, Ronnie
5. Thanks to small groups that reach out - Lighthouse group, jail ministry

6. The benevolence committee led by Patrick
7. Thanks to Grace for leading Winter Relief
8. Others who personally volunteer various ministries outside of BRCC to help and serve
9. BRCC members for volunteering to help in all of this - your creativity and efforts amaze and humble me

B. An encouragement to continue to serve the vulnerable

1. If you have never participated - come to Winter Relief this week
2. If you grow weary because you wonder if it makes a difference, or because you have been burned - please don't give up!

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:9–10

- a. Paul knows weariness in good works is a danger!
- b. The harvest can seem a long time in coming!
- c. Our task is not to force harvest, but to simply plant, water, fertilize - God will give growth at the proper time

3. Look to the Lord and let Him renew your strength!

C. The Table of Mercy

1. This Table represents the mercy of God to us
2. We are the vulnerable - poor in spirit, aliens to God's kingdom, slaves to sin

3. But God has shown us great mercy in Christ!
4. Come and receive the mercy of God - and go and give it away to others!

### The Ministry of Mercy

Proverbs 19:17  
January 8, 2017  
Communion

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Teaching keywords: Mercy ministry; good works; evangelism; God's Law

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, <sup>17</sup> encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17

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