**Honour the poor and destitute**

***Pastor Margaret Loy***

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God. (Proverbs 14:31)

# Introduction

# BIG IDEA: To Honour God is to Honour the Poor and Destitute

God is Holy, and calls us to be Holy. God is to be feared and adored. We worship Him when we obey His commands. God’s holiness means that He is also just and righteous, merciful and faithful. His attributes ﬂows from who He is. We are called to be His children. We have been adopted into His family, and called to be Ambassadors of His Kingdom. How are we to treat the poor? How then do we live?

The sermon started with a video about 40% families living below RM 2500. They live in difficult conditions in all aspects of live from transport, medical facilities and education. We should walk in Jesus’s shoes where he always was always honouring the poor.

The poor in Malaysia live on RM 460 per month. For every one person who earn more than RM15,000.00, there are 2 families living below RM 2500. This doesn’t explain who the families are. As a dog lover, when you see the dog with a disease, you will want to go and help the dog because they feel miserable.

Poor people do not get the care as the dogs get. Dr Dennison worked with the poor and added policies. Many People’s Housing Programme (or Program Perumahan Rakyat, PPR) flats do not get cleaned regularly and become place for unhygienic conditions. Many people use alternative lifestyle. The poor do hot have power to decide many things. They lack friends. Their families disown them. They are vulnerable and bullied.

Due to this they do things they don’t want to do.

Today, we will examine the scriptures in 3 parts –

1. Reasons we are called to Honour the Poor and Destitute (i.e. to value and walk with the Poor),
2. Causes of poverty and suﬀering
3. How we can honour the poor and destitute

# Reasons to honour the poor

## Human beings are made in the image of God

 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

The Image of God – “Imago Dei” – Every person carries the image and likeness of God. The implications flows from there. We have inherent worth and dignity.

Human beings are the highest in God’s order. Because of this, we have inherent worth and dignity. God sent his Son so that we are redeemed from sin and we will go to heaven. Who do we give dignity to? We honour the Sultan, and other VIP’s of society but don’t give equal respect to the poor. We can choose between right and wrong.

When we look at Mona Lisa’s painting, France was considering to sell it at 1.5 billion pounds.

##  God values every individual and takes special note of the poor

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God. (Proverbs 14:31)

This is what the Lord Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor." (Zechariah 7:9-10a)

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ (Matthew 25:40)

God values every individual and takes special note of the poor

In the old testament, the bible speaks of the poor often. It is only the Bible that mentions foreigners. Each foreigner is also created by God. God seems to be biased to the poor. What about the better and well to do person? When two children are playing on the swing and one falls down, the father will run to the person who was hurt.

## God hears the cry of the poor and defends them

He equates how we treat the poor to how we treat God. In Matthew 25, he equates the kingdom to the ways of the world.

You, Lord, hear the desire of the aﬄicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror. (Psalm 10:17-18)

God sees their troubles as well. God pays attention to the poor and defends. We need to fight for their rights.

Who are the poor today? The indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak are suffering as their land is taken from them. They are subject to violence and human trafficking. People are tricked to working in Peninsula Malaysia. There are Sabahans who were deported to the Philippines.

# Causes of poverty and suffering

Just as through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so sin spread through all men” (Roman 5:12).

**The foundational cause of poverty is sin.**

The eﬀects of the Fall are numerous and far reaching. Sin has aﬀected every aspect of our being. It has aﬀected our lives on earth and our eternal destiny. Our sinful nature caused people to become lazy and morally sinful, caused oppression, wickedness, and injustice which bring about poverty and suﬀering.

Creation groans in bondage to corruption which causes disasters that destroy crops and homes, subjecting people to poverty.

Death itself, (which is the result of sin) leaves widows and orphans destitute Multiple and interconnected causes of poverty – increases the intensity of the suﬀering.

Where is the hope? God is the hope.

During typhoon Haiyan. The victims were subjected to natural disasters and 2 years later; many NGOs are still helping to rebuild the city.

Many Indians are living in squatters and flats as lands were developed. Many in Myanmar are denied of their citizenship rights. There are many maids who are working as maids. Households are earning below RM 2500 can apply for PPR flats but there are many more people waiting for the flats. They are vandalised. There are 700 people queueing at UNHCR in Malaysia. Due to the European crisis, Malaysia was affected. Refugees have no rights in Malaysia. It is difficult,

# How can we Honour the Poor

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. How can we honour the poor (Micah 6:8)

## Act Justly – do justice. *“Mishphat” in Hebrew*

In a larger sense justice is not only giving to others their rights, but involves the active duty of establishing their rights.

### Justice and Righteousness are part of the very character of God.

Righteousness and Justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you (Psalm 89:14)

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! (Amos 5:24)

God is behind justice.

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices --- mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law --- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. (Matthew 23:23)

Justice is a precursor to mercy. Without justice, exercising mercy is hypocrisy. But justice alone is not good enough. Justice has to be coupled with mercy so that it does not become cold or impersonal. Mercy also needs justice, without which dependency and an “entitlement” mentality may arise.

God rewards those who are righteous and faithful.

The Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The Lord delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed. (1Samuel 26:23)

This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (Hebrews 8:10)

## Love Mercy – “checed” or “hesed” in Hebrew – often translated “loving kindness”

### Mercy or Loving Kindness is part of God’s character too!

Luke 15:11-32 tells the story of the Prodigal Son, and the longing Father

At the prodigal son, the father honoured him as a son should be. He celebrated the son. We need to engage the poor personally. In “ministers of Mercy”. People usually live in good communities where social systems are already just, so they forget the others who are in poorer conditions.

### Mercy and grace changes our relationship with each other and needs to be coupled with justice.

In the book of Philemon, Paul asks Onisemus to forgive Philemon and accepting him as a brother. Paul goes beyond justice, and shows an alternative way of implementing justice with grace.

The above showed that we need a holistic response in mercy – not just charity, but a genuine care and concern which crosses social, economic boundaries to touch lives personally, and coupled with justice, to elevate them to being brothers and sisters both privately and publicly.

**Policy makers** should practice impartiality between the rich and the poor.

**Employers** should pay a fair living wage and treat them fairly and provide good accommodation. People allow dogs to stay with them.

**For all of us:** all creation is given for the “common good”



**Refer to the You-tube video “The Story of Stuﬀ”** which will explain how consumerism had damaged the whole earth and aﬀected the poor who had not even consumed those goods. We need to consume less and share what we have with others.

## Walk humbly with our God

* The posture of our heart is important as we Act Justly and Love Mercy.
* We learn to listen.
* We learn to embrace.
* The mystery of the gospel of reconciliation is Shalom, for sinful, depraved, broken human beings to ﬁnd peace – peace with God, with fellow human beings, with society and with His world as He is reconciled to God.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)



Posture of the heart. Out of the regeneration of our heart.

The church can participate. 20% of members are from these group. You can donate your toys, books and other educational material. Don’t only donate but participate with the poor with many MGO’s. Take the 30-day challenge.

“The dying, the cripple, the mental, the unwanted, the unloved-- they are Jesus in disguise”. (Mother Teresa) Mother Theresa took this literally and treated people as “Jesus in disguise”.

“Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.” (Bob Pierce, Founder of World Vision)

**Big Idea Application**

To Honour God is to Honour the poor and destitute. To honour God is to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him.

 Applications:

* What does it mean to be “made in God’s image”? What does it say about you, your abilities, capacity and potential?
* Do you know of someone or some family in some “reduced” or “diminished” circumstances and can you be part of extending God’s grace or mercy to him or her?
* Do you know of anyone you can speak for? To be a voice for the voiceless? To help establish justice for him or her? Or can you live in solidarity with the poor, live more simply and consume less, so that you can share more?
* Remember the Sharing Corner and the 30 Day Challenge. Can we “walk with” someone for part of their journey? Can we be a friend to the poor and destitute? Coming alongside in an empathetic manner and journey humbly as Jesus did with us – identifying with our humanity and pointing us to God.



*Sermon notes prepared by Abbey Thangiah.*

*Prayer pointers prepared by May Ng.*



SERMON: Honour the poor and the destitute

**Pray:**

* The Holy Spirit to convict the hearts of people of sin and anything that is not of God.
* Revelation that when people extend mercy and kindness to the less fortunate, they are actually doing it for God.
* The correct posture of the heart in our daily walk with God.
* Empowerment of the poor and the destitute to have a right to an acceptable standard of living.
* God’s love to prevail amongst all levels of society.

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* ***(Matthew 6:33)***

**MINISTRIES & EVENTS: Sharing Corner**

The Sharing Corner, an initiative by the Community Excel Services, is a place where church members will have the opportunity to share their possessions by giving them to those who may need it more.

**Pray:**

* Spirit of generosity to prevail in the giving away of material possessions.
* Tender hearts among all to heed the call to give.
* Wisdom and discernment in the allocation of material goods collected to those in need.
* Joy among those who have decided to give.

*If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? (1 John 3:17)*

MALAYSIA MY NATION: Talks by Muslim preacher

***The Islamic Research Foundation president, Dr Zakir Naik, is scheduled to give several talks in and around Malaysia.***

**Pray:**

* Open hearts and minds.
* Religious harmony to prevail in Malaysia.
* Truth and righteousness to predominate.
* Fairness among the authorities in the treatment of various religious leaders.

*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* ***(John 13:35)***

* **A TRANSFORMED WORLD: Earthquakes**

*There have been numerous reports of earthquakes around the world in recent times, notably in Kyushu in Japan, the island of Vanuatu in the Pacific Ocean, in the northeast coast of Taiwan as well as in Myanmar which could be felt all the way in Nepal and India.*

**Pray:**

* Wisdom and calmness for the authorities in knowing what to do.
* Discernment and foresight for those likely to be affected in anticipation of such natural disasters.
* God’s peace to comfort the victims.
* Wise deployment of technology and resources in predicting any future earthquakes.

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)*