

Garlands *instead* *of* Ashes

A Resource for Worship

THE SALVATION ARMY
Canada and Bermuda
Territorial Headquarters
Social Services Department



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On one occasion a lawyer came forward to put this question to him: 'Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said, 'What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?' He replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' 'That is the right answer,' said Jesus; 'do that and you will live.'

But he wanted to vindicate himself, so he said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was on his way from Jerusalem down to Jericho when he fell in with robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down by the same road; but when he saw him, he went past on the other side. So too a Levite came to that place, and when he saw him he went past on the other side. But a Samaritan who was making the journey came upon him, and when he saw him was moved to pity. He went up and bandaged his wounds, bathing them with oil and wine. Then he lifted him on to his own beast, brought him to an inn, and looked after him there. Next day he produced two pieces and gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Look after him; and if you spend any more, I will repay you on my way back." Which of these three do you think was the neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He answered, 'The one who showed him kindness.' Jesus said, 'Go and do as he did.'

(Luke 10:25-37)

Preface

The questions we formulate reveal, sometimes shamefully, our hidden motivations and biases. Jesus was acutely aware of this fact. He often sought to expose the underlying assumptions and reasons behind the questions that he was asked. By doing so, Jesus was able to illuminate issues within the human heart and mind that might have otherwise remained hidden. Moreover, he was able to prompt the discoveries made by persons and communities to find their expression in lived realities.

In Luke 10:25, we are told of a lawyer who approaches Jesus with a question intending to test him: "Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Sensing his lack of sincerity Jesus throws the lawyer's question back at him: "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" (vs. 26) It is safe to assume that Jesus does not mean to flatter the lawyer by doing this. In fact, Jesus seems to want to remind the lawyer that his answer — that he must love both God and his neighbour — demonstrates wisdom only in so far as it is manifest in daily life. This prompts the lawyer to ask a second question: "And who is my neighbour?" (vs. 29) Again Jesus detects that the lawyer is seeking both to gloss over his own failures to embody the commands of which he has spoken, as well as to demonstrate an intellectual and religious wisdom aimed at discrediting Jesus.

Jesus responds to the lawyer's second question with a parable of a man who is accosted by bandits on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. The traveler is stripped, beaten and left for dead. The first person to come across the wounded man is a priest. The priest does not stop to aid the traveler but passes him by on the opposite side of the road. Similarly, upon seeing the injured traveler a Levite neglects to assist the man in his moment of need. Lastly, a Samaritan discovers the hurting man. Unlike those who had come before him, the Samaritan is moved to pity, bandages the traveler's wounds and insures that the injured man has an accommodation where he can recover from the harm done to him.

No less than Jesus' original audience, we anticipate the answer to the question, "And who is my neighbour?" will emerge as the narrative unfolds. However, Jesus understands that there is a greater issue

at stake than the one raised by the lawyer. The description of the traveler that Jesus gives in the narrative poignantly communicates what Jesus believes ought to be the basis for the love and compassion we demonstrate to others. Jesus simply relates that the man at the side of the road is wounded and needs help. For Jesus "the traveler" is a generic symbol of anyone in need — regardless of apparent condition or social status. We are not told of the traveler's nationality, wealth, history, or of his character. Jesus takes the answer to the question, "And who is my neighbour?" to be self-evident. He does not concern himself with defining the parameters by which one might determine who is worthy of one's help, or qualify as "neighbour." According to Jesus we are all neighbours and thus each have a responsibility for the welfare of one another. Having been created in the image of God, each person possesses intrinsic worth and dignity and thus is deserving of love and compassion. From his response in the parable, we can safely conclude that Jesus is rebuking those who selectively choose their "neighbour." According to Jesus, there is no righteous way to circumscribe the responsibilities of love.

Jesus recognizes that in asking his question the lawyer is trying to justify the lack of compassion he has shown to individuals that he has deemed "untouchable," or "irredeemable." In fact, when the lawyer suggests that it is acceptable to limit our love to select economic, religious, cultural, or morally upright groups, Jesus finds the lawyer's lack of compassion astonishing. It is for this reason that at the end of the parable Jesus does not explicitly address the question "Who is my neighbour?" but, rather seeks to raise what he believes to be the more important question: "Who among the pageant of characters depicted was the neighbour *to* the neighbour?" Thus Jesus instructs both the lawyer and all others who hear and read his words about the necessity of treating others compassionately, especially in moments of great need. It as if Jesus is saying to the lawyer and the rest of his audience, "Good people, take a look around you. You know who your neighbours are. You even know what many of your neighbours' needs are. That's not the problem here. What is at issue is what you are doing about it!"

That is the question here! Moreover, it demonstrates the importance of being aware of the motivations of our heart and subsequently taking action to address them. In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus uncovers that which is truly important when he asks, "Which of these three do you think was the neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" (vs. 36) It is a question that pinpoints the all too human reluctance to care for and participate in the redemption of others. The question is not simply, "Who is my neighbour?" — although, that is a terribly important one as well. Jesus suggests that answers to questions about who requires assistance surface readily when we have addressed the more fundamental question: "What kind of neighbour are we (am I) willing to be?" Jesus calls forth within us that part of our humanness, or god-likeness, that comprehends the only answer appropriate to his question. This answer is twofold. It involves both recognition of our reluctance to become involved in each other's well being, as well as the greater realization that this recognition alone is not enough. Jesus calls us to participation for the sake of each other's well being. Christ confronts and challenges us to come to terms with our own selfish concerns and then to overcome them, living life in devotion to God and for the sake of our brothers and sisters.

Of course, if we are given the strength to overcome our selfishness, and if we are prepared to reach out to others with a genuine, unconditional love, other questions will need to be raised. Have we failed to recognize individuals or groups of people in need? Are the ways in which we are seeking to be a neighbour appropriate? Are there ways that we can encourage people to become involved in each other's lives especially where there are particular needs? However, once we have been empowered by God's love, once we recognize the importance of compassionate concern for one another, we will be prepared to grapple with questions such as these as they arise. We will be willing to seek out answers with our full being — heart, mind, body and soul.

The parable of the "Good Samaritan" points to the nature of our own neighbourliness and the differences that are too often found between the kind of neighbours we *are* and the kind of neighbours we *ought* to be. Who is my neighbour? Absolutely, everyone in need. And in some way we are all needy. What kind of neighbour am I? Hopefully, the kind that seeks to draw alongside others because of a compassionate concern for their well being.

As we open ourselves to Christ's love, the Holy Spirit reveals to us the ways in which we have been blind to the needs of our neighbours. Moreover, as the Holy Spirit continues to guide our efforts, he reveals to us the most appropriate ways to be involved in each other's lives. As we seek to imitate Christ, God frees the creative potential of his love in us, allowing us to be supportive of one another. This is the teaching that we as Jesus' audience, no less than the lawyer, need to hear. God wishes to lead us out of the confined space of our selfish concern towards the limitless possibilities of his universe of unconditional and

mutual love. As we learn what it is to live sacrificially and compassionately, we also discover the miracle of being drawn nearer to the heart of God.

There are those among Salvationists who have enriched our heritage and shaped the identity of The Salvation Army by their devoted response in the affirmative to Jesus' question, "Are you willing to be a neighbour to your neighbour?" It is our hope that the following worship materials will remind us of the devotion of such people as these, and of other individuals from within the Judeo-Christian faith tradition. These materials have been collected in order to encourage Salvationists to continue to ask questions that will lead to the persistent commitment of living our lives and devoting our resources to the benefit of others. It is our hope that these materials will help members of Salvation Army congregations to reflect on what it means to be a godly neighbour and to be reminded, as we are by the parable of the "Good Samaritan," that genuine worship of God includes the compassionate treatment of all peoples, and especially those who experiencing the effects of loss, abandonment, marginalization, or enduring trials of an extraordinary kind.

After all God has commissioned us through Christ and by his Spirit to "proclaim the good news," "bind up the broken-hearted," and "release the captives," bestowing upon those who suffer at their own hands or at the hands of others, "garlands instead of ashes" (Isa. 61:1-3).

J.E.H.R
Mar. 1999

Prayers

God of Power

God of power and love,
enlighten our nation
when it is self-seeking,
your church when it is indifferent,
ourselves when we fall short
of what you would have us be.

Forgive all that lies behind
and give us your Spirit
to strengthen and guide us
in the life ahead.
Amen.

Christian Aid

Vulnerable God

Vulnerable God, we pray
for those powerless in our world,
those who are trapped
on the edges of society
by our indifference to them.

Lord, forgive us our silence
in the face of structures that trap people.

We ask that through your powerful love
we may be strengthened
and committed to their cause.

Help us to work for the dignity
and fulfillment of all people.
Amen.

Christine Allen

Teach Us to Build the Kingdom

Born of a Hebrew Mother
Exiled to live with the Egyptians
Rejoicing in the faith of a Syrian Woman
And a Roman Soldier
Calling both Greek and Jew to discipleship
Allowing an African to carry your cross
A Roman woman to bathe your face
A stranger-thief to join you in heaven
Christ of all, teach us to build the Kingdom for
All your people.
Amen.

Barbara D'Arcy

It is Better to Light One Candle

Lord Jesus, it is better to light one candle
than to give up hope and curse the darkness.
It is better to save one stranger from deportation,
and reunite one separated family,
than to say that it is not our problem,
and we can't do much to help.
It is better to join hands in one work of love,
than to sit on our hands and feel powerless.

Lord, help us to love you in the stranger and the refugee.
Help us to love ourselves enough to believe
that we can change things for the better.
Help us to love, as you have loved us.
Amen.

Christian Aid

Where There is No Vision, the People Perish....

Bringer of the Dawn, give us a fresh vision of our world
revealed as the sun rises, as your love would paint it.
Awaken in us a desire for a world
where the weak are protected,
and no one goes hungry or without a home;
a world where the abundance of your creation is shared,
and everyone can enjoy it;
a world where different nations, races and cultures
live with tolerance and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice,
and justice is guided by love.
Give us the courage to make this vision real.
Through Jesus Christ, Lord of the morning, we pray.
Amen.

Barbara D'Arcy

The Lord, the Giver of Life

Have you not seen? Have you not heard?
The Lord, the giver of life is speaking to us.
He is showing us his people and their grief.
He is telling us their stories and their distress.
He is calling us to discipleship,
 to involvement,
 to vulnerability,
 to risk-taking,
 to commitment.
He is asking us for
 our hands,
 our hearts,
 our souls, and
 our bodies.
He is asking us to go out into the unknown.
He is asking us for not less than everything
until the task is done.
Amen.

Barbara D'Arcy

God of Our Choices

(Deuteronomy 30)

God of our choices, you set before us
the possibility of life and good,
but all too easily we choose death and evil.

In fear we build up possessions and wealth
as a defensive wall against attack by the poor.

In selfishness we consume
more than is good for us and for the world,
and indulge in luxury while many thousands
are without even a roof over their heads.

In ignorance we foster prejudice
and blame the poor for being poor,
the homeless for being homeless,
the unemployed for being out of work.

We pray that, turning from fear, selfishness
and ignorance, we may come together to take
the road opened up at the Cross, and choose life
and the pursuit of truth, justice and love.
Amen.

Barbara D'Arcy

Lord, When We Pray for Peace

Lord, when we pray for peace,
show us that there can be no peace
without the establishment of justice,
and the renewal of integrity.

When we are tempted to retreat
into a simple peace of mind,
stir within us the passion of Amos for justice,
the vision of Isaiah for a just society,
the courage of Jeremiah in challenging the powerful,
and the personal integrity of Hosea.

Then, Lord, within the struggle
for righteousness and equality,
for wholeness, for honesty, for justice,
come to us with your special greeting,
 dispelling our fears,
 canceling our guilt,
 refreshing our spirit
with the welcome, the peace, of your Son
Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.
Amen.

Lord, your kingdom come

Lord, your kingdom come:
 to the homeless
 the lonely
 the abandoned
Lord, your will be done:
 for the powerless
 the voiceless
 the sorrowing
 the despairing
On earth, as it is in heaven.
Amen.

Christine Allen

That Face, Lord, Haunts Me

If, where the Father has placed us, we do not fight with all our strength against the world in disorder, we are not real Christians. We do not love God. For he said it through St. John: "If he does not love the brother whom he has seen, it cannot be that he loves God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20); and, "My children, love must not be a matter of words or talk; it must be genuine, and show itself in action" (1 John 3:18).

But it isn't simply by improving the look of a person's face that we as Christians can bring peace to our conscience; it is by finding and tackling all the social and moral disorders which have produced that face.

The poor will judge us.

"And they too will reply, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and did nothing for you?' And he will answer, 'I tell you this: anything you did not do for one of these, however humble, you did not do for me.'" (Matt 25:44-45)

That face, Lord, has haunted me all evening.
It is a living reproach,
A prolonged cry that reaches me even in my quietude.

That face is young, Lord, yet man's sins have attacked it;
He was defenseless and exposed to their blows.

They came from all over;
Destitution came,
The shanty,
The dilapidated bed,
The foul air,
Smoke,
Alcohol.
Hunger,
The hospital,
The sanatorium.
Work — crushing, humiliating.
Unemployment,
The Depression,
War.

Frenzied dances,
Revolting songs,
Demoralizing movies,
Langorous music,
Unclean and deceitful kisses.

The struggle to live,
Rebellion,
Brawls,
Cries,
Blows,
Hate.

They cam from all over;
Men with their horrid selfishness,
their dreadful faces, their big dirty fingers,
their broken nails,

their fetid breath.
They hastened here from the ends of the earth,
from the bounds of time.
And slowly, one after another,
Or suddenly, all together, like brutes,
They struck,
 whipped,
 lashed,
 wrought,
 moulded,
 hammered,
 engraved,
 sculptured.

And here at last is this face, this poor face;
It took eighteen years to fashion it,
It took hundreds of centuries to produce it.
Ecce Homo: behold the man.

Here is this poor face of a man, like an open book,
The book of the miseries and sins of men;
 the book of selfishness,
 conceit,
 cowardess;
 the book of greed,
 lust,
 abdications,
 compromises.

Here it is like a mournful protest,
 like a cry of revolt,
 but also like a heart rending call,
For behind this ridiculous, grimacing face,
Behind those uneasy eyes —
Like the clasped hands of one drowned,
white on the dark surface of the pool —
Is a light,
A flame,
A tragic supplication,
The infinite desire of a soul to live above its mire.

Lord, that face haunts me, it frightens me, it condemns me;
For, with everyone else, I have made it, or allowed it to be made.
And I realize, Lord, that this boy is my brother, and yours.

What have we done with a member of your family!

I fear your judgement, Lord.
It seems to me that at the end of time all the faces of brothers,
 and especially those of my town, my neighbourhood, my
 work, will be lined up before me,
And in your merciless light I shall recognize in these faces
 the lines that I have cut,
 the mouth that I have twisted,

the eyes that I have darkened,
and those whose light I have extinguished.

They will come, those that I have known and those that I have
not known, those of my time and those that have
followed, fashioned by the workshop of the world.

And I shall stand still, terrified, silent.
It is then, O Lord, that you will say to me

... "It was I..."

Lord, forgive me for that face which has condemned me,
Lord, thank you for that face which has awakened me.

Michael Quoist

Hunger

All people are our brothers and our sisters, for the blood of Christ made us children of the same Father. When a member of a family suffers and dies, the other members grieve. Since we know that millions of people die of hunger every year, we can no longer live as before. Even if my means permit it, a mode of living beyond that which is fitting and necessary is a sin. We repeat: it is a sin to live without fighting with all our might, where we are, for more justice in the world.

"There was once a rich man, who dressed in purple and the finest linen, and feasted in great magnificence every day. At his gate, covered with sores, lay a poor man named Lazarus, who would have been glad to have satisfied his hunger with the scraps from the rich man's table. Even the dogs used to come and lick his sores." (Luke 16:19-21)

"He said to his disciples, 'Make them sit down...' Then, taking the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate to their hearts' content." (Luke 9:14-17)

I have eaten,
I have eaten too much,
I have eaten because others did,
Because I was invited,
Because I was in the world and the world would not have understood;
And each dish,
Each mouthful,
Each swallow was hard to get down.
I have eaten too much, Lord,
While at that moment, in my town, more than fifteen hundred
persons queued up at the breadline,
While in her attic a woman ate what she had salvaged that
morning from the garbage cans.
While urchins in their tenement divided some scraps from the
old folks' home,
While ten, a hundred, a thousand unfortunates throughout the
world at that very moment twisted in pain and died of
hunger before their despairing families.

Lord, it's terrible, for I know,
Men know, now.
They know that not only a few destitute are hungry,
but hundreds at their own doors.
They know that not only several hundreds,
but thousands are hungry on the borders of their country.
They know that not only thousands,
but millions are hungry throughout the world.
Men have made a map of the geography of hunger,
Areas of starvation and death, appalling.
The figures stand out in stark and implacable truth.
Our minimum wage here for a month is, for millions and
millions of human beings, their maximum wage for a year.
One-third of humanity is underfed.

Lord, you see this map, you read these figures,
Not like a calm statistician in his office,
But like the father of a large family
bending over the head of each of his sons.

Lord, you have seen this map,
you have read these figures since the beginning of time,
And you told the story, for me, of the rich man at the table
and the poor starved Lazarus;
And you spoke, for me, of the Last Judgement.

“...I was hungry...”

Lord, you are terrible!
It's you who queue up at the breadline,
It's you who eat the scraps of garbage,
It's you who are tortured by hunger and starve to death,
It's you who die alone in a corner at the age of twenty-six,
While in another corner of the great hall of the world —
with some of the members of our family — I eat,
without being hungry, what is needed to save you.

“...I was hungry...”

Remind me of that, Lord, if I stop for a moment giving myself.
I'll never be through giving bread to my brothers,
for there are too many of them.
There will always be someone who won't have had their share.
I'll never be through fighting to get bread for all my brothers.

Lord, it isn't easy to feed the world.
I would rather say my prayers regularly, properly;
I would rather abstain on Fridays,
I would rather visit my pauper,
I would rather give to fairs and orphanages;
But apparently that isn't enough.
It's nothing, if one day you can say to me: “I was hungry!”

Lord, I'm no longer hungry,
Lord, I don't want to be hungry again.
Lord, I want to eat only what I need to live,
to serve you and to fight for my brothers.
For you are hungry, Lord,
You die of hunger, while I am surfeited.

Michael Quoist

Housing

In the world's large cities the problem of housing is appalling. It's our first duty to realize it. Many of the comfortably-housed have never even been through the slum quarters of their city. We must speak out, for public opinion is a powerful weapon and each of us helps to create it. There are many organizations that need our active help, or, at the very least, our support. If we love our brothers, we shall always find a way, wherever we are, to do something for them.

"Suppose a brother or sister in is rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, 'Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat,' but does nothing to supply their bodily needs what good is that?" (James 2:15-16)

Lord, I can't sleep; I have gotten out of bed to pray.
Its night outside, and the wind blows and the rain falls,
And the lights of the city, signs of the living, pierce the darkness.
They bother me, Lord, these lights — why are you showing them to me?
They beckon to me, and now they hold me captive,
while the woes of the city murmur their muffled lament.
And I cannot escape them, Lord; I know these sufferings too well.
I see them rising before me,
I hear them speaking to me,
I feel them striking me,
they were bothering me when I was trying to sleep.

I know that in one single room
thirteen crowded people are breathing on one another.
I know a mother who hooks the table and chairs to the ceiling
to make room for the mattresses.
I know that rats come out to eat the crusts, and bite the babies.
I know a father who gets up to stretch oilcloth
above the rain-soaked bed of his four children.
I know a mother who stays up all night,
since there is room for only one bed, and the two children are sick.
I know a drunken father
who vomits on the child sleeping beside him.
I know a big boy who runs away alone into the night
because he can't take it any more.
I know that some men fight for the women,
as there are three couples in the same attic.
I know a wife who avoids her husband,
as there is no room for another baby at home.
I know a child who is quietly dying,
soon to join his four little brothers.
I know...
I know hundreds of others — yet I was going to sleep
peacefully between my nice white sheets.
I wish I didn't know, Lord.

I wish it were not true.
I wish I could convince myself that I'm dreaming,
I wish someone could prove that I'm exaggerating,
I wish they'd show me that all these people have only themselves
to blame, that it's their fault they are so miserable.
I'd like to be reassured, Lord, but I can't be. It's too late.

I've seen too much,
I've listened too much,
I've counted too much, and, Lord, these ruthless figures have
robbed me forever of my innocent tranquility.

So much the better, son,
For I, your God, your Father, am cross with you.
I gave you the world at the beginning of time,
and I want each of my children to have a home
worthy of their Father in my vast kingdom.
I trusted you, and your selfishness has spoiled everything.
It's one of your most serious sins, shared by many of you.
Woe unto you if, through your fault,
a single one of my children dies in body or in spirit.
I tell you, I will give to those the finest lodgings in Paradise.
But the thoughtless, the negligent, the selfish, who, well-sheltered
on earth, have forgotten others — they have had their reward.
There will be no room for them in my Kingdom.

Come, son, ask forgiveness for yourself and others tonight.
And tomorrow, fight with all your strength, for it hurts your
Father to see that once more there is no room for his Son at the inn.

Michael Quoist

The Hospital

Suffering is a mystery, and only faith can throw light on it. Pain is not directly willed by God. Humanity has rejected his plan; it threw itself and the universe out of balance, and so suffering was born. But Christ came to straighten out the disorder. He made of useless suffering the very means of redemption.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” (Isa. 53:4-5)

This afternoon I went to see a patient at the hospital.
From pavilion to pavilion I walked, through that city of
suffering, sensing the tragedies hardly concealed by the
brightly painted walls and the flower-bordered lawns.
I had to go through a ward; I walked on tiptoe,
hunting for my patient.
My eyes passed quickly and discreetly over the sick, as one
touches a wound delicately to avoid hurting.
I felt uncomfortable,
Like the non-initiated traveler lost in a mysterious temple,
Like a pagan in the nave of a church.
At the very end of the second ward I found my patient,
And once there, I could only stammer. I had nothing to say.

Lord, suffering disturbs me, oppresses me.
I don't understand why you allow it.
Why, Lord?
Why this innocent child
who has been moaning for a week, horribly burned?
This man who has been dying
for three days and three nights, calling for his mother?
This women with cancer
who in one month seems ten years older?
This workmen fallen from his scaffolding,
a broken puppet less than twenty years old?
This stranger, poor isolated wreck, who is one great open sore?
This girl in a cast, lying on a board for more than thirty years?
Why, Lord?
I don't understand.
Why this suffering in the world that
 shocks
 isolates,
 revolts,
 shatters?
Why this hideous suffering
that strikes blindly without seeming cause,
Falling unjustly on the good, and sparing the evil;
Which seem to withdraw, conquered by science,
but comes back in another form, more powerful and more subtle?
I don't understand.

Suffering is odious and frightens me.
Why these people, Lord, and not others?

Why these, and not me?

Son, it is not I, your God, who have willed suffering; it is men.
They have brought it into the world in bringing sin,
Because sin is disorder, and disorder hurts.
There is for every sin, somewhere in the world and in time,
a corresponding suffering.
And the more sins there are, the more suffering.
But I came, and I took all your sufferings upon me,
as I took all your sins,
I took them and suffered them before you.
I transformed them, I made of them a treasure.
They are still and evil, but an evil with a purpose,
For through your sufferings, I accomplish Redemption.

Michael Quoist

He Was in the Middle of the Street

The world is in such a state of disorder that many people, to earn their living, are forced to take part in work that destroys others, physically or morally. Victims of economic systems that are sinful, some are obliged to lie and to steal.

All those concerned should suffer profoundly from that tragic situation. They share that tragic responsibility for the state of the world, and must recognize the sins of their society and blame themselves. But just as true contrition is found only when one seeks to change one's life, so true suffering for the sins of the social order is found only when one works to change systems that are inhuman. This is an absolute duty from which there is no dispensation for the Christian.

"You are the light of the world; a city cannot be hidden if it is built on a mountain-top. A lamp is not lighted to be put away under a bushel measure; it is put on the lamp-stand, to give light to all the people of the house; and your light must shine so brightly before men..." (Matt. 5:14-16)

He was in the middle of the street,
Staggering, and singing at the top of his lungs
in the husky voice of a drunk.
People turned round and stopped, amused.
A policeman came silently from behind,
Grabbed him brutally by the shoulder,
and took him to the police station.
He was still singing,
And people laughing.

I did not laugh, Lord.
I thought of his wife, who would wait in vain for him that night.
I thought of all of the other drunks of the town,
 those of the pubs and the bars,
 those of living-rooms and cocktail parties.
I thought of their homecoming, at night;
 of the frightened youngsters,
 the empty wallets,
 the blows,
 the cries,
 the tears,
I thought of the children who would be born of drunken embraces.

Now you have spread your night over the city, Lord,
And while tragedies unfold,
The men who have justified alcohol,
 produced alcohol,
 sold alcohol.
That same night sleep in peace.

I think of all those men, and I pity them;
 they have produced and sold misery,
 they have produced and sold sin.
I think of all the others, the crowd of others who work
 to destroy and not to build,
 to stupefy and not to uplift,
 to debase and not to ennoble.

By all the wounded in soul and body, victims of the work of
their brothers,
By all the dead for whom thousands of men have conscientiously
manufactured death,
By that drunk, grotesque clown in the middle of the street,
By the humiliation and the tears of his wife,
By the fear and the cries of his children,
Lord, have pity on me, too often slumbering.
Lord, have pity also on the miserable men who are completely
asleep and who collaborate in a world
where brothers kill each other to earn their bread.

Michael Quoist

Readings

Were We There?

- Leader** Lord, were we there?
I was hungry and you came and fed me.
I came along to the soup run one night and you kept
filling my bowl with hot soup. You spoke to me, knelt
beside me and listened to my story. You touched my
hand and said, "See you tomorrow."
- All** Was that you, Lord?
- Leader** I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.
I came last night to the shelter after hours; I was so
tired and thirsty. You gave me lots of tea and sat with
me while I drank it. You found a clean sleeping bag for
me and sent me on my way refreshed.
- All** Was that really you?
- Leader** I was a stranger and you received me.
I was lonely and sad; all my family is still in Somalia.
You took me into your house and made me welcome,
and tried to speak my language.
- All** Was that you, Lord?
- Leader** I was naked and you clothed me.
My children's clothes were so dirty. We couldn't keep
clean in the shelter. The washing machine never
worked. You saw me crying in the park, with the buggy
full of dirty clothes, and took me home, and washed the
clothes and gave me your love.
- All** Was that really you?
- Leader** I was sick and you took care of me.
My parents turned me out when they heard I was HIV
positive. I came to your centre and found you really
cared whether I lived or died. You helped me find a
place and surrounded me with people who did not reject
me.
- All** Was that you, Lord?
- Leader** I was in prison and you visited me.
I was the dregs, there wasn't anything I wasn't capable
of. But you didn't mind, I think that you saw someone
else inside me, not the awful me I am used to, but
someone else. Maybe I'm not so bad.

All Lord, were we there? Was that really you?
Barbara D'Arcy

You Came to Give Us Life

Leader Lord you came to give us life;

All Forgive us when we deny this life to others by averting our
eyes from the way they have to live.

Leader Lord, you came to give us freedom;

All Forgive us when we ignore the chains of homelessness that
hold our sisters and brothers captive.

Leader Lord, you came to give us peace;

All Forgive us when we are full of resentment and envy, at odds
with our neighbors.

Leader Lord, you came to bring us joy;

All Forgive us when your joy eludes us because we try to hold on
to it too tightly.

Christine Allen, Barbara D'Arcy

Holy God, As You Have Touched Us

- Leader** Holy God, as you have touched us, so may we now touch others with your love: the oppressed and the persecuted, crying out for the liberating touch of justice.
- All** Touch them with your justice in us.
- Leader** The poor and the outcast and the homeless, crying out for the life-giving touch of compassion.
- All** Touch them with your compassion in us.
- Leader** The battered victims of war and violence, crying out for the healing touch of peace.
- All** Touch them with your peace in us.
- Leader** The lost and the lonely, families in damp and squalid homes, crying out for the welcoming touch of friendship.
- All** Touch them with your friendship in us.
- Leader** The prisoners of their own fear and cruelty, people in positions of power who do not use it with love, crying out for the touch of mercy.
- All** Touch them with your mercy in us.
- Leader** And those we love, our families, our friends, crying out for the continuing touch of love.
- All** Touch them with your love in us.
- Leader** May our lives be the place where you touch us, and we touch others in your name, for you are the source of our life and love.
Amen.

A Litany of Peace, Compassion and Justice

- Leader** O God, you have loved us and cared for us through the ages, grant that we may discover your vision for wholeness as we meet together this week.
- All** Hear our prayer, O Lord.
- Leader** O God, the Holy Scriptures describe your kingdom as a Holy Community where people live in peace — a peace based upon compassion and justice. Speed the day when we may see beyond our preset understanding and discover true community in our midst.
- All** Hear our prayer, O Lord.
- Leader** For the poor of our nation who often live on the streets and find their dignity threatened by a society which measures success in dollars and who are told to wait for a better day.
- All** We pray to you, O God.
- Leader** For those who suffer because our nation continues to have many societies; each separate, and unequal.
- All** We pray to you, O God.
- Leader** For those among the affluent who in their preoccupation with material things have failed to find joy in sharing and fulfillment in service.
- All** We pray to you, O God.
- Leader** For those who govern our nation and shape its future and who labour to understand the problems of your people, and who bear the burden of criticism.
- All** We pray to you, O God.
- Leader** For those who refuse to compromise with injustice because they have compassion on all your people and therefore find themselves rejected by many who are comfortable and established.
- All** We pray to you, O God.
- Leader** For our churches, synagogues and organizations, which sometimes seem more concerned with impressive buildings, personally oriented programming and respectability in the community, than with feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and comforting the sick.

- All** We pray to you, O God.
- Leader** That the brick, mortar and steel, concrete or bottom line which give visible form to our organizations may not blind us from the fact that our organizations exist for the well being of those we serve.
- All** We pray that your love and concern for all humanity, especially your compassion for the marginalized and oppressed, is the origin of our vision, O Lord.
- Leader** We pray that our organizations may be a force for wholeness through our unity in wanting our values integrated into the very fabric of our institutions of health care and human services.
- All** Give to us your strength, O Lord.
- Leader** That we may respond to the challenge to create a new community that will bear witness to every person of your love and compassion.
- All** Lord, help us for your sake, and for the sake of each other. Amen.

The Chosen of God

(James 1:27-2:11)

- All** The kind of religion which is without stain or fault in the sight of God our Father is this: to go to the help of orphans and widows in their distress and keep oneself untarnished by the world.
- Men** Suppose you pay special attention to those who are well-dressed and say to them, "Please take this seat," while to the poor you say, "You can stand; or you may sit here on the floor by my footstool," do you not see that you are inconsistent and judge by false standards?
- Women** Listen, my friends. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he has promised to those who love him? And yet you have insulted those who are poor. Are not the rich your oppressors? Is it not they who drag you into court and pour contempt on the honored name by which God has claimed you?
- Leader** If, however, you are observing the sovereign law laid down in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," that is excellent. But if you show snobbery, you are committing a sin and you stand convicted by that law as transgressors.
- All** For if anyone keeps the whole law apart from one single point, they are guilty of breaking all of it.

The Blessed...

(Luke 6:20-36)

- Leader** Then turning to his disciples he began to speak:
- Women** "How blest are you who are in need; the kingdom of God is yours."
- Men** "How blest are you who now go hungry; your hunger shall be satisfied."
- Women** "How blest are you who weep now; you shall laugh."
- Men** "How blest you are when people hate you, when they outlaw you and insult you, and ban your very name as infamous, because of the Son of Man. On that day be glad and dance for joy; for assuredly you have a rich reward in heaven; in just the same way did their fathers treat the prophets."
- Women** "But alas for you who are rich; you have had your time of happiness."
- Men** "Alas for you who are well fed now; you shall go hungry."
- Women** "Alas for you who laugh now; you shall mourn and weep."
- Men** "Alas for you when all speak well of you; just so did their fathers treat the false prophets."
- Leader** "But to you who hear me I say:"
- All** "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who treat you spitefully. When someone hits you on the cheek, offer them the other cheek too; when someone takes your coat, let them have your shirt as well. Give to everyone who asks you; when anyone takes what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others as you would like them to treat you."
- Women** "If you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. Again, if you do good only to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do as much. And if you lend only where you expect to be repaid, what credit is that to you?"
- Men** "Even sinners lend to each other to be repaid in full. But you must love your enemies and do good; and lend without expecting any return; and you will have a rich reward: you will be sons of the Most High, because he himself is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate."

I Will Not Forsake Them...

(Isaiah 41:17-20)

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| All | The wretched and the poor look for water and find none, their tongues are parched with thirst; but I the Lord will give them an answer, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. |
| Men | I will open rivers among the sand-dunes and wells in the valleys; |
| Women | I will turn the wilderness into pools and dry land into springs of water; |
| Men | I will plant cedars in the wastes, and acacia and myrtle and wild olive; |
| Women | The pine shall grow on the barren heath side by side with fir and box, |
| All | That all may see and know, may once and for all give heed and understand that the Lord himself has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has performed it. |

The Least of These...

(Matthew 25:34-26)

- Leader** Then the king will say to those on his right hand, "You have my Father's blessing; come, enter and possess the kingdom that has been ready for you since the world was made."
- All** Then the righteous will reply, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and gave you drink, a stranger and took you home, or naked and clothed you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and come to visit you?"
- Leader** And the king will answer, "I tell you this: anything you did for one of these here, however humble, you did for me."
- Leader** Then he will say to those on his left hand, "The curse is upon you; go from my sight to the eternal fire that is ready for the devil and his angels. For when I was hungry you gave me nothing to eat, when thirsty nothing to drink; when I was a stranger you gave me no home, when naked you did not clothe me; when I was ill and in prison you did not come to my help."
- All** And they too will reply, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or ill, or in prison and did nothing for you?"
- Leader** And he will answer, "I tell you this: anything you did not do for one of these, however humble, you did not do for me."

Love One Another...

(1 John 4:17-21)

- Leader** Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God. For God is love; and his love was disclosed to us in this, that he sent his only Son into the world to bring us life.
- All** The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love he showed to us in sending his Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins. If God thus loved us, dear friends, we in turn are bound to love one another.
- Leader** Though God has never been seen by any man, God himself dwells in us if we love one another; his love is brought to perfection within us.
- All** Here is the proof that we dwell in him and he dwells in us: he has imparted his Spirit to us. Moreover, we have seen for ourselves, and we attest, that the Father sent the Son to be the saviour of the world, and if anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in that person and that person dwells in God.
- Leader** Thus we have come to know and believe the love which God has for us.
- All** God is love; those who dwell in love dwell in God, and God in them. This is for us the perfection of love, to have confidence on the day of judgement, and this we can have, because even in this world we are as he is.
- Leader** There is no room for fear in love; perfect love banishes fear. For fear brings with it the pains of judgement, and anyone who is afraid has not attained to love in its perfection.
- All** We love because he loved us first. But if anyone says, "I love God," while hating another, that person is a liar. If anyone does not love those who are seen, it cannot be that, that individual loves God who is not seen. And indeed this command comes to us from Christ himself: that anyone who loves God must also love others.

High as He Is, He Cares for the Lowly.
(Psalm 138)

- Reader 1** I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; boldly, O God,
will I sing psalms to you.
- Reader 2** I will bow down towards your holy temple, for your love and
faithfulness I will praise your name; for you have made your
promise wide as the heavens.
- All** When I called to you, you answered me and made me bold
and valiant-hearted.
- Reader 1** Let all the kings of the earth praise you, O Lord, when they
hear the words you have spoken; and let them sing of the
Lord's ways, for great is the glory of the Lord.
- Reader 2** For the Lord, high as He is, cares for the lowly, and from afar
He humbles the proud.
- All** Though I walk among foes you preserve my life, exerting
your power against the rage of my enemies, and with your
right hand you save me.

Garlands Instead of Ashes

(Isaiah 61:1-4)

- All** The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me;
- Men** He has sent me to bring good news to the humble, to bind up the broken-hearted,
- Women** To proclaim liberty to captives and release to those in prison;
- Men** To proclaim a year of the Lord's favour and a day of the vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn,
- Women** To give them garlands instead of ashes, oil of gladness instead of mourner's tears, a garment of splendour for the heavy heart.
- All** They shall be called Trees of Righteousness, planted by the Lord for his glory. Ancient ruins shall be rebuilt and sites long desolate restored; they shall repair the ruined cities and restore what has long lain desolate.

Love in Action...

(1 John 3:16-19)

- Leader** It is by this that we know what love is: that Christ laid down his life for us. And we in our turn are bound to lay down our lives for one another.
- All** But if you have enough to live on, and yet you shut up your heart against others when you see them in need, how can you be said to have the divine love dwelling in you?
- Leader** My children, love must not be a matter of words or talk; it must be genuine, and show itself in action.

A Paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13.

Though I speak with the eloquence and diagnostic authority of the most esteemed and respected theorist and practitioners in the field of human service and have not love, I am as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift to formulate an accurate prognosis, having a keen understanding and knowledge of psycho-social dynamics and theory and the belief that I could employ these to remove the mountains of human pain and despair... and have not love, I am nothing.

And though, with my skills and education I pass up positions in private industry, accepting less pay and meager fringe so that I might feed the hungry and counsel the distressed, and have not love it is of no profit.

Love teaches patience and kindness. It demands that we do not become envious of others' positions. Personality or pay; requires that we not be abusive in the use of the power we have so as to oppress neither client nor colleagues; sets a standard for principled thought and behaviour.

It does not rejoice in iniquity as it advocates for justice and truth. Love becomes that sustaining drive that keeps us true to the commitment we make as agents of change.

Love doesn't fail, but wherever there is increased accuracy in prognosis... we sometimes still fail, wherever there is new development diagnostic theory and method it will eventually fade in significance, and wherever innovative and effective treatment modalities evolve, eventually they will vanish.

For we know that all of our understanding is fragmented and falls short.

But when Christ, that perfected love, comes for the final time all of these limitations will disappear.

As a child I spoke, understood and thought like a child, my behaviours being bounded by the parameters of self-centredness and a host of self-serving dynamics. As an adult I have been called to develop a new perspective, foster new behaviours, model new attitudes guided by a spiritually mature expression of love.

So, at this juncture, even though we don't fully comprehend the total picture, we do have some degree of understanding and assurance that mandates that we move forward.

And although we embrace in no little way the importance of faith and hope...

Love emerges as the greatest of these.

Poems

Possibilities

So, friend, if you're homeless there's one of two possibilities:
either you live or you die
if you die it's OK
but if you live there's one of two possibilities:
either you find a place or you don't
if you find a place it's OK
but if you don't there's one of two possibilities:
either you sleep rough or you get a bed in a shelter
if you sleep rough it's hard
but if you get a bed in a shelter there's one of two possibilities:
either it's nice or it ain't
if it's nice it's OK
but if it ain't there's one of two possibilities:
either you're left alone or you are offered drugs
if your left alone it's OK
but if your offered drugs there's one of two possibilities:
either you take them or you don't
if you don't it's OK
but if you take them there's one of two possibilities:
either you live or you die.

Barbara D'Arcy

I Was Hungry

I was hungry
And you formed a humanities club
And discussed my hunger.
Thank you.
I was naked
And in your mind
You debated the morality of my
Appearance.
I was homeless
And you preached to me
Of the spiritual shelter of the love of God.
I was imprisoned
And you crept off quietly
To your chapel in the cellar
And prayed for my release.
I was sick
And you knelt and thanked God for your health.
I was lonely
And you left me alone
To pray for me.

Author Unknown

I Am a Street Person

I am a street person.
My arms are punctured with
false dreams and my face is
painted with counterfeit beauty.

My clothes are incrustated
with vomit and urine
and I stagger from
the burden of addiction.

I flounder in the Lake of Alcohol
and can see no shore.

Violence offers me her breast
of bitterness and I nurse on
its poison.

Speak not to me of your God...
for he dwells in a pulpit...
sleeps between clean sheets...
and sings songs that have lost
their meaning.

He does not come to the place
where I live, nor does he allow
mercy to mingle with my despair.

I have seen his people from a
distance, but they will not
live in my country.

I cry out in silence... beat
upon the door of indifference...
and seek light in the darkness
of my vigil... but apathy
is steadfast and unwavering.

How shall my prayer rise if
there be no messenger to carry it.
Its journey is not high...
only to the ears and the hearts
of God's people.

Yet these people seem to
honour him with their lips...
but their heart is far away
from Him... in vain it seems
do they worship Him...
yet they teach us doctrines...
the precepts of humanity.

Feed me for I am hungry...
Give me drink for my throat
is parched.
Come to me for I am sick...
Visit me here in my prison.
Clothe me in my nakedness.
Do these things that I might believe.
Though I am a stranger...
invite me in.

For the road of freedom is
narrow and few are those of us
who find it.

But the road of indifference
is broad and cries out only
of destruction.

I am cripple and I am blind.
I am alone in a hallway of silence.
I am a street person.
Is there none that can hear?

What I See in London

What I see in London are tall buildings,
smart cars, well dressed people,
a whole scene that has no place for me,
no place for my wife,
no place for my children.
Lord Jesus, where are you?

Are you in those smart offices,
those smart houses, those smart churches?
They think you are.
They talk about you the whole time,
just as if you were right there with them.
They are so sure that you are guiding them,
that they are doing your will.
I like to think that you are actually here with us,
that you are one of the left-out ones.

If that is how it is,
if you are really here with us, for us,
I think I could bear it
because I'd know that this wasn't the end,
that you still come
to get prisoners out of jail
and blind people out of darkness,
to get hungry people into the place
where they can feed their little ones,
instead of helplessly
listening to them cry.

But my son does not call you Lord,
Jesus,
let alone call on you,
Lord Jesus.
He uses your name as a swear word.
Jesus! he says,
Bloody rich man's Jesus!
I fear for him,
for us,
for those rich people.

O Jesus, Jesus,
come soon,
clear up the barriers
open it all up, because if you don't
something awful is going to happen.
Do you hear me,
one of those 'homeless'
on the outside looking in?
RSVP
soon.

Cry Justice.

I Stand By the Door

I stand by the door.
I neither go in too far, nor stay too far out,
The door is the most important door in the world —
It is the door through which people walk when they find God.
There's no use my going way inside, and staying there,
When many are still outside and they, as much as I,
Crave to know where the door is.
And all that so many ever find
Is only a wall where the door ought to be.
They creep along the door blind,
With outstretched, groping hands.
Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,
Yet they never find it ...
So I stand by the door.

The most tremendous thing in the world
Is for people to find that door — the door to God.
The most important thing anyone can do
Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands,
And put it on the latch — the latch that only clicks
And opens to that individual's own touch.
People die outside that door, as starving beggars die
On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter —
Die for want of what is within their grasp.
They live, on the other side of it — live because they have not found it.
Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,
And open it, and walk in, and find Him...
So I stand by the door.
Go in, great saints, go all the way in —
Go way down to the cavernous cellars,
And way up into the spacious attics —
It is a vast, roomy house, this house where God is.
Go into the deepest of hidden casements,
Of withdrawal, of silence, of sainthood.
Some must inhabit those inner rooms,
And know the depths and heights of God,
And call out to the rest of us how wonderful it is.
Sometimes I take a deeper look in,
Sometimes venture a little farther;
But my place seems closer to the opening...
So I stand by the door.

There is another reason why I stand there.
Some people get part way in and become afraid
Lest God and the zeal of his house devour them;
For God is so very great, and asks all of us.
And these people feel a cosmic claustrophobia,
And want to get out. "Let me out!" they cry.
And the people way inside only terrify them more.
Somebody must be at the door to tell them that they are spoiled
For the old life, they have seen too much:

Once taste God, and nothing but God will do any more.
Somebody must be waiting for the frightened
Who seek to sneak out just where they came in,
To tell them how much better it is inside.

The people too far in do not see how near these all are
To leaving — preoccupied with the wonder of it all.
Somebody must watch for those who have entered the door,
But would like to run away. So for them, too,
I stand by the door.
I admire the people who go way in.
But I wish they would not forget how it was
Before they got in. Then they would be able to help
The people who have not yet even found the door,
Or the people who want to run away again from God.
You can go in too deeply, and stay in too long,
And forget the people outside the door.
As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,
Near enough to God to hear Him, and know He is there,
But not so far from people as not to hear them,
And remember that they are there, too.
Where? Outside the door —
Thousands of them, millions of them.
But — more important for me —
One of them, two of them, ten of them,
Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.
So I shall stand by the door and wait
For those who seek it.
“I had rather be a door keeper...”
So I stand by the door.

Samuel Shoemaker

Quotes

"Too often it seems that one set of angry voices asks, 'Do you care about justice and equality, or are you one of those people still obsessed with Christology and biblical authority?' while other voices demand, 'Do you really care about Jesus and the Bible, or are you one of those folk always talking about peace and justice?' It becomes difficult to say, 'I really care about Jesus and the Bible, and *therefore* I want to talk about justice, and peace, and vulnerable love.'" (William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God*)

"He, your brother, was redeemed as you were by the blood of Christ; he is hungry, in need, perhaps pressed by a creditor, and you have plenty of this world's goods. You say, 'That's no affair of mine. Am I expected to rescue him from distress with my money?'

If that is your attitude, your heart is empty of God's love, you are not a child of God.

You glory in being a Christian — yes, that is what you are called, but not what your deeds answer to. If you don't live like a Christian, what is the point of being called one?" (St. Augustine)

"Holy solitaires is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness. Faith working by love is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian Perfection." (John Wesley)

"I expect that we exclude Lazarus because we are frightened that our hearts will be touched if we enter into relationship with him. If we listen to his story and hear his cry of pain we will discover that he is a human being. We might be touched by his broken heart and by his misfortunes. What happens when our hearts are touched? We might want to do something to comfort and help him, to alleviate his pain, and where will that leave us? As we enter into dialogue with a beggar, we risk entering into an adventure. Because Lazarus needs not only money but also a place to stay, medical treatment, maybe work, and even more, he needs friendship.

That is why it is dangerous to enter into a relationship with the Lazaruses of our world. If we do we risk our lives being changed." (Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*)

"The exceeding bitter cry of the disinherited has become to be as familiar in the ears of men and the dull roar of the streets or as the moaning of the wind through the trees. And so it rises unceasing, year in and year out, and we are too busy or too idle, too indifferent or too selfish, to spare it a thought. Only now and then, on rare occasions, when some clear voice is heard giving more articulate utterance to the miseries of the miserable men, do we pause in the regular routine of our daily duties, and shudder as we realize for one brief moment what life means to the inmates of the Slums. But one of the grimmest social problems of our time should be sternly faced, not with a view to the generation of profitless emotion, but with a view to its solution." (William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*)

"Why all this apparatus of temples and meeting-houses to save men from perdition in a world which is to come, while never a helping hand is stretched out to save them from the inferno of their present life?" (William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*)

"I believe that God can and will bring good out of evil, even out of the greatest evil. For that purpose he needs people that who make the best use of everything. I believe that God will give us all the strength we need to help us resist in all times of distress. But he never gives it in advance, lest we should rely on ourselves and not him alone. A faith such as this should ally our fears for the future. I believe that even our mistakes and shortcomings are turned to good account, and that it is no harder for God to deal with them than our supposedly good deeds. I believe that God is no timeless fate, but that he waits for and answers sincere prayers and responsible actions." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "After Ten Years," *Letters and Papers from Prison*)

"We are not Christ, but if we want to be Christians, we must have some share in Christ's large-heartedness by acting with responsibility and in freedom when the hour of danger comes, and by showing a real sympathy that springs, not from fear, but from the liberating and redeeming love of Christ for all who suffer. Mere waiting and looking on is not Christian behaviour. The Christian is called to sympathy and action, not in the first place by his own sufferings, but by the suffering of his brothers and sisters, for whose sake Christ suffered." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "After Ten Years," *Letters and Papers from Prison*)

"There remains an experience of incomparable value. We have for once learned to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled — in short, from the perspective of those who suffer. The important thing is that neither bitterness nor envy should have gnawed at the heart of during this time, that we should have come to look with new eyes at matters big and small, sorrow and joy, strength and weakness, that our perception of generosity, humanity, justice and mercy should have become clearer, freer, less corruptible. We have to learn that personal suffering is a more effective key, a more rewarding principle for exploring the world in thought and in action than personal good fortune. This perspective from below must not become the partisan possession of those who are eternally dissatisfied; rather, we must do justice to life in all its dimensions from a higher satisfaction, from a foundation whose talk is beyond any talk of 'from below' or 'from above.' This is the way in which we may affirm it." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "After Ten Years," *Letters and Papers from Prison*)

"Christ did not, like a moralist, love a theory of good, but he loved real people. He was not, like a philosopher, interested in the 'universally valid,' but rather in that which is of help to the real and concrete human being." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*)

"My religious commitment seems to be taking me in such a different direction from the way it started out. That was when silence seemed so full, when it was the beginning not the ending of words. That was when everything I did was directed towards one goal — the glory of God. And now I don't think of God as so glorious. I see God dragged through the course of time, splattered with the mud of human history. And I see no other option than to get a little muddied." (Mary Jo Leddy, *Say to the Darkness, We Beg to Differ*)

"The lesson to be learned from [the Holocaust] is that we must prevent another situation in which any group is forced to depend only on goodness, pity and compassion.

What the Jews at the time needed, and what they and many marginal groups need today, is political and social guarantee of their human rights. To ensure such a guarantee we must develop the attitude of respect which is due to those who are our equals.

We, as Christians cannot pride ourselves on the goodness of a few if we have not helped to prevent a situation of injustice in which only a few can survive." (Mary Jo Leddy, *Say to the Darkness, We Beg to Differ*)

"When the lives of the poor are reduced to ashes, one is either fanning the flames or pulling people out of the furnace. There is no other option. Even bystanders fan the flames with the blink of their eyes." (Mary Jo Leddy, *Say to the Darkness, We Beg to Differ*)

"Real commitment begins when the heart is broken open by love. Our hearts may be passionate, frail, or tender, but until they are broken open by love, we cannot be committed. In love one becomes compelled and free, driven and desiring. In love, the difference between choosing and being chosen dissolves." (Mary Jo Leddy, *Say to the Darkness, We Beg to Differ*)

"In the end, the renewal of Christianity will not attract long-haul commitment because of new theologies or razzle-dazzle liturgies or relevant programs or critical issues. Only the witness of suffering love, of faithful hope, of persistent prayer, of joyful justice, will attract people to a church which will live forward into the future because it stretches far back — beyond the nineteenth century — to the origins of our Christian tradition." (Mary Jo Leddy, *Say to the Darkness, We Beg to Differ*)

"Saint Thomas Aquinas described humility as the habit of acting beyond the two extremes of false pride and false humility. False pride might be, for example, the illusion that we must do everything to change the world, while false humility would be the illusion that we can do nothing to change the world. Both of these attitudes leave us with a sense of powerlessness. The one leads to burn-out and the other to rust-out.

Authentic humility says, 'I cannot do everything to change the world but I can do something.' Each of us must discover what that 'something' is." (Mary Jo Leddy, *Say to the Darkness, We Beg to Differ*)

"We have a choice between squandering our lives or sacrificing our lives. That choice makes a difference in this world." (Mary Jo Leddy, *Say to the Darkness, We Beg to Differ*)

"For the very rich, the future can be managed. The middle class plan for the future. But for the very poor, the future is what happens to you." (Mary Jo Leddy, *At the Border Called Hope: Where Refugees Are Neighbours*)

"The place where God calls you is the place where your deep joy meets the deep hunger of the world." (Monsignor Clem Kern)

"They [the poor] are the trash and offal of humanity, crucified by the structures of this world. If they resist, they are crucified suddenly and violently. If they do not resist, they are crucified gradually and slowly." (Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*)

"Mercy means genuine com-passion, not merely pity. The greater the passion, the greater the compassion and mercy. Prophecy means denunciation. Prophecy is truth-telling. It denounces the horrors of death and the causes of death. It does so because this is the truth. The threat to the life of the poor exposes the truth of all humanity — a truth that, because it is sin, takes active measures not to be discovered." (Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*)

"The defense of the life of the poor is love. The defense of that life at the price of our own life is to love with the limit, love with ultimacy. And suddenly we are confronted with the intuition that runs like a golden thread throughout the warp and woof of the whole history of humanity: one who lives in love, lives." (Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*)

"The 'reign of God' is not merely a utopian symbol, to which an adequate response would be sheer hope. It is an ethical symbol as well. It demands a change of attitude and conduct. And ultimately it is a praxic symbol, calling for determinate activity: in general terms, life in love — the practice of the practical side of charity, the transformation of historical injustice into human relationships of genuine justice." (Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*)

"It is from a place among the poor that one is finally able to evaluate the accomplishments of humankind, whether these be designated the 'reign of God' or something else coming to the same thing. From the underside of history, the truth of history comes to light." (Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*)

"Real persecution has been directed against the poor, the body of Christ in history today. They, like Jesus, are the crucified, the persecuted servant of Yahweh. They are the ones who make up in their own bodies that which is lacking in the passion of Christ. And for that reason, when the Church has organized and united itself around the hopes and the anxieties of the poor, it has incurred the same fate as Jesus and the poor." (Oscar Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless*)

"Teachers of morals who do not see the difference between the problem of charity within the limits of an accepted social system and the problem between economic groups, holding uneven power within modern industrial society, have simply not faced the most obvious differences between the morals of groups and those of individuals." (Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*)

"Love for equals is difficult. We love what is weak and suffers. It appeals to our strength without challenging it. But we also revere those who suffer because of their own strength or nobility. If their strength is triumphant our reverence may turn into fear or even to hatred." (Reinhold Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy*)

"Christians always live in a deeper dimension than the realm in which the political struggle takes place. But they cannot simply flee the world of political contention into a realm of mystic eternity of moralistic illusion." (Reinhold Niebuhr, *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics*)

"'Otherworldliness' is not an escape from history. It gives us a fulcrum from which we can operate in history. It gives us a faith by which we can seek to fulfill our historic tasks without illusions and without despair." (Reinhold Niebuhr, *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics*)

"When you work for a more just, participatory and sustainable society whose members share in crucial decision making about the issues that are important for their lives, that is when you hear the cry, 'Don't mix religion with politics!'" (Bishop Desmond Tutu, 'Politics and Religion — The Seamless Garment,' *Hope and Suffering*)

"Just as there can be no cheap grace so there can be no cheap reconciliation, because we cannot cry, 'peace, peace' where there is no peace." (Bishop Desmond Tutu, 'Politics and Religion — The Seamless Garment,' *Hope and Suffering*)

"The freedom of love is good, and that freedom risks suffering and, in a sinful world full of violence and injustice, will always encounter it sooner or later. Love does not regret the price it pays for making itself vulnerable, but to speak of paying the price is itself to acknowledge that the suffering itself is an evil. Vulnerability, on the other hand, is a perfection of loving freedom." (William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God*)

"As Christians we are called to take risks, to make ourselves vulnerable in love, to share with strangers, to dare to challenge unjust power and take the consequences." (William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God*)

"Preach the gospel at all times, if necessary, use words." (St. Francis of Assisi)

"We can render the people around us a great service if we can provide an environment in which they not only can discover their gifts but also develop them." (Alan Loy McGinnis, *Bringing Out the Best in People*)

"All the things in our lives, all the complicated structures we spend so much time and energy creating, are built on sand. Only our relationships to other people endure. Sooner or later, the wave will come along and knock down what we have worked so hard to build up. When that happens, only the person who has somebody's hand to hold will be able to laugh." (Harold Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*)

"When someone listens to us with real concentration and expresses sincere care for our struggles and our pains, we feel that something very deep is happening to us. Slowly, fears melt away, tensions dissolve, anxieties retreat, and we discover that we carry within us something we can trust and offer as a gift to others. The simple experience of being valuable and important to someone else has a tremendous recreative power." (Henri Nouwen, *Compassion*)

"Really honest receptivity means inviting a stranger into our world on his or her terms, not ours. When we say, 'You can be my guest if you believe what I believe, think the way I think and behave as I do,' we offer love under a condition for a price. This leads easily to exploitation, making hospitality into a business. In our world in which so many religious convictions, ideologies and lifestyles come into increasing contact with each other, it is more important than ever to realize that it belongs to the essence of a Christian spirituality to receive our fellow human beings into our world without imposing our religious viewpoint, ideology or way of doing things on them as a condition for love, friendship and care." (Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out*)

"All real living is meeting." (Martin Buber, *I and Thou*)

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." (Aesop)

"It has always seemed to me that a vital church should be reaching, not only the settled working people with homes and families, but also those without any place in society, the homeless, the friendless, faithless derelicts who have lost everything." (Sam Shoemaker)

"There was a soldier who was wounded in battle. The padre crept over and did what he could for him. He stayed with him when the remainder of the troops retreated. In the heat of the day he gave him water from his own water bottle, while he himself remained parched with thirst. In the night, when the chill frost came down, he covered the wounded man with his own coat, and finally wrapped him in even more of his own clothes to save him from the cold. In the end, the wounded man looked up at the padre. Then said the wounded man, 'If Christianity makes a man do for another man what you have done for me, tell me about it, because I want it.' Christianity in action moved him to envy a faith which could produce a life like that." (William Barclay, *Letters to the Romans: The Daily Study Bible Series.*)

"I don't like at all the Western language that holds apart love and justice. You know how people talk this way. It's a bad form of talking. I would say the crucifixion is a supreme act of justice on Christ's part — not that he is crucified but that he submits to crucifixion. It's a supreme act of justice to love his enemies. I just don't like the view in the Western world that justice is elementary and then there is love beyond it, because I don't see, on that view, how there could be any justice." (George Grant, *George Grant in Conversation*)

"I am ceaselessly torn between the perfection of God and the misery of man." (Simone Weil)

"Hell is to be one's own." (Plato)

"Like the Son, the Holy Spirit was sent into the world to further and complete the work of integral redemption and liberation. The special field of action for the Spirit is history. Like the wind (the biblical meaning of 'spirit'), the Spirit is present in everything that implies movement, transformation, growth....This history of the struggles of the oppressed for their liberation is the history of the call of the Holy Spirit to the heart of a divided world....Evangelical conversion requires more than a change of heart; it also requires a liberation of social organization insofar as it produces and reproduces sinful patterns of behavior. This social conversion is brought about through transformative social struggle, with the tactics and strategy suited to bringing about the changes needed. Social sin has to be opposed by social grace, fruit of God's gift and of human endeavor inspired by God." (Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*)

"It is difficult to make a man miserable while he feels he is worthy of himself and claims kindred to the great God who made him." (Abraham Lincoln)

"An old Quaker, passing along the street, saw a cartman's horse suddenly fall dead. It was a serious loss, for the horse was the man's livelihood. The bystanders shook their heads and clucked sympathetically. The Quaker took off his broad-rimmed hat, placed a bank note in it, and said, 'Friends, I am sorry for this man ten dollars' worth. How sorry are you?' (Megiddo Message)

"At the close of life, the question will be not, how much have you got? but how much have you given? Not how much have you won? but how much have you done? Not how much have you saved? but how much have you sacrificed? It will be how much have you loved and served? not how much were you honoured" (Nathan C. Schaeffer)

"Faith must 'work by love,' emotion must be transmitted into action, and love to faithful, self-sacrificing service, else they become a kind of pleasant, a respectable, but nonetheless deadly debauchery." (Samuel Logan Brengle, *When the Holy Ghost is Come*)

"One picture I could not banish: the beautiful face and golden head of the little fifteen year-old mother, appearing in the filthy dark, box-like room as a jewel amid the ruins; the fast and bitter tears falling on the human mite dead in her arms; the despair in the frightened blue eyes as she said, 'Look there is no place for us in life, or in death: no place for my baby or me. Where can I hide my baby? Where can I hide myself?'" (Evangeline Booth, *Songs of the Evangel*)

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All scripture quotations, except those quoted in the prayer poems of Michael Quoist, have been taken from The New English Bible (NEB) translation.

