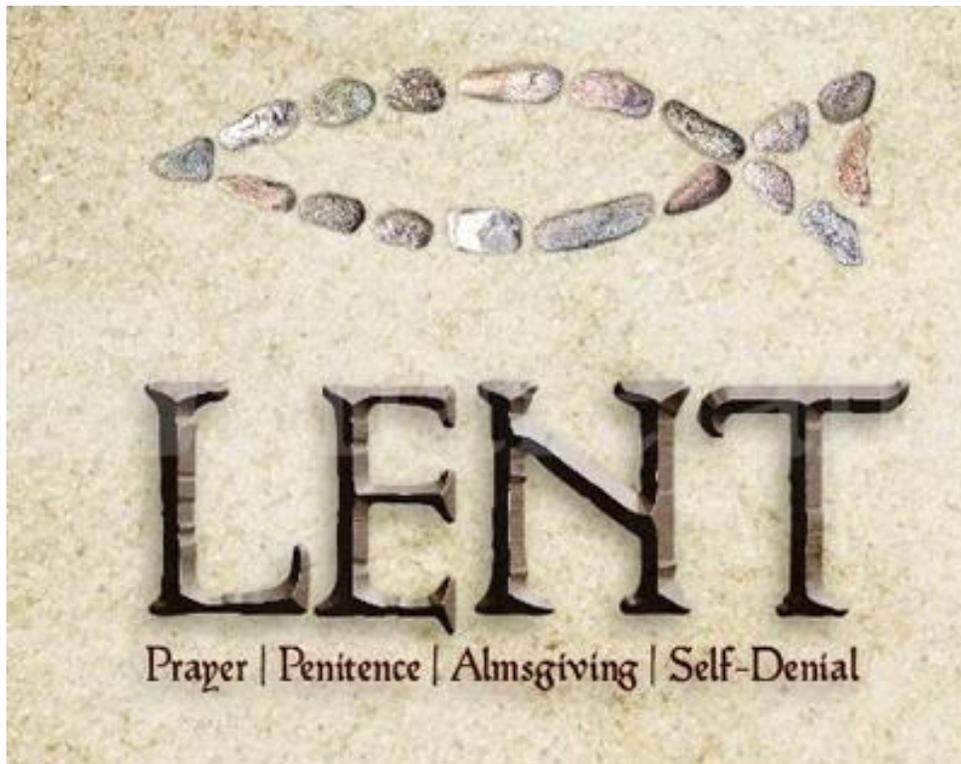


## Week 3 – Feb. 29 – March 4

Missions reach around the world, beginning in our own back yards. How do we do it all? With God's guidance we can discover His calling on our individual lives. Ask Him, and He'll show you. *Matthew 7:7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*

NIV



# I turn my back on the homeless

posted in [Devotions](#) by [weeklydevotion.com](#) (by Mitch)

## 1 Corinthians 13:12

*“For now we see in a glass, dimly, but then we shall see face to face”*

I have a parking permit for the lot across from my church.

It’s a busy lot, and occasionally full by the time I get to work. Typically, though, there are a few spots available in the back row.

Those spots fill up last for two reasons: They’re the farthest from the street, and they’re also the spots adjacent to the homeless shelter.

The shelter is over-crowded, and many of the people spend their time outside. Usually there are 5-10 people huddled in small groups, just talking and passing the time a few feet from where I park. I pull in and glance a little nervously at them through my dirty windshield. I make sure to lock my doors.

There is a moment, very brief, when I step out of my car and am facing their direction. Sometimes I make eye contact, but usually not. Then, I heave a small sigh of helplessness, turn my back on them, and head the opposite direction into the church.

I’m not suggesting my church has turned its back on the homeless. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, this week we received a beautiful plaque from the shelter naming members of our church “Volunteers of the year”.

Our church provides space for “Jubilee Cafe”, a breakfast kitchen that operates twice a week. Members serve along with other churches at LINK, the Lawrence Interdenominational Nutrition Kitchen. Our church is one of many who participate in Family Promise, where families with young children stay at the church for a week and are cared for by members of the church. Our pastor’s fund provides help on a case by case level for those needing deposit money for moving into an apartment.

I’m so proud of the people in my church who help our community’s homeless people. But I don’t always feel like I’m one of them. I realize that although I encourage our members to help out in so many ways, I need to be involved, too.

And so, I’ve signed up to help with the next Family Promise week. I’m one of the people on the prep team. We’ll be re-configuring furniture and setting up cots in several classrooms, so that the families who come to stay will feel comfortable and welcome. I may not actually meet any of our visitors this time, but it’s a step in the right direction. Next time, I may even stay overnight. We’ll see.

God has called us to do more than see these precious people through a windshield, dimly.

God calls us to love them...Face to Face.

**Prayer:** God, help me stop turning my back on the things You want me to see. Show me how You were able to love them and give me the strength to do just that.

# LOVE

BY MELANIE GIBBONS

## John 13

*“After Jesus had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord — and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you.”*

Several years ago, I went to visit my grandmother in rural Virginia. The timing of the trip happened to coincide with the annual Love Feast held at her Church of the Brethren congregation. A Love Feast is a celebration and remembrance of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet and the Lord’s Supper. She was so excited for me to attend this special event with her.

What I remember from that event was simple. Grandmother washed my feet. I washed hers.

I am thankful for this memory, for this tradition that put flesh and bone to story in John. For me, it’s also an example of my family’s emphasis of serving others. Not because we’re somehow better, but in response to the incredible, humble, sacrificial love Christ gave first to us.

Sometimes, foot washing involves a basin and a towel. Other times, it could look like a team spending months listening to a community in preparation for a new project.

**PRAYER** Lord who comes to us with a basin and towel, thank you for your example of service to the world. You call us to serve all those around the world, from the Philippines to Colombia to Uganda and all nations in-between. Give your servants the strength to go to those places they are needed the most. In Jesus name we pray, AMEN.

# FAITH

BY ERIN BROCK

Mark 4:35-41

...*"Do you not care that we are perishing?"*

Frustrated that their teacher is asleep in their storm-swamped boat, the disciples berate Jesus for his apparent indifference to the danger surrounding them. They want him to get up and help them bail water from the boat.

So the disciples are amazed and stunned when Jesus settles the wind and sea. They certainly didn't expect their mortal friend Jesus to calm the storm. Suddenly their image of Jesus takes on another dimension.

Jesus challenges the disciples' expectations, responding not only with weather-altering assistance but also turning around and questioning them, calling them to grow beyond their limited expectations of him, asking, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" Even though fear easily overrides faith under precarious conditions, Jesus urges them to have faith anyway.

What does it mean to have faith in the midst of conflicts and disasters? Are we to wait for Jesus to save the day?

If we instead allow Jesus to challenge our expectations of who he is and how he responds to suffering in the world, our faithful response to disasters and conflicts broadens as well. When we are asleep to the suffering of those in our global "boat," their calls rouse us to action. Despite our shortcomings and fears, Christ acts through us to calm the storms in turmoil ridden places. In amazement, we learn that we are called to be, as Martin Luther said, "little Christs" in service to others. We're called to provide relief to those suffering conflicts and natural disasters and help people rebuild their lives in the following months and years. We're called to speak out for peace. Unhindered by our expectations and fears we're called to respond to those who are perishing, knowing that Jesus is in the boat along with us, working through us.

**PRAYER** Jesus, who calls us to respond to suffering in the world, empower your people to withstand the chaos of wind and waves. Give peace to those who have known ony war and give comfort to those who have known only cold. In the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, AMEN.

# ACCOMPANIMENT

BY DON PEDRO VELIZ

## Micah 6:8

*He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God? NASB*

In order to make sure we are following Micah 6:8, we must ensure that we are not like the bloody Pharisees whose white tunics were always bloody because they didn't want to look at or see the reality of what was happening around them. They walked bent over, with their heads and eyes down so they wouldn't have to see injustice, pain or poverty. As a result of their desire to be blind, they were literally bloody because they bumped into trees and other obstacles. They were figuratively bloody because of what they ignored.

Sometimes we are like the bleeding Pharisees. Sometimes we think that not looking and not seeing what is wrong or unjust around us means that we didn't violate the law. That is not enough. God calls for preventative justice. This preventative justice is very difficult because our sin runs very deep. We are natural sinners and natural transgressors. We try to see how we can be good and sometimes we think we are good. We want to stand with and do good for our fellow man. But we must remember that solidarity isn't just being a "good guy;" we must have disinterested mercy that is worthy of the other person.

The key to be humble before God is to ensure that we are walking with awareness and that we are walking humbly. The best example we can look to for humility and obedience is Jesus. Jesus died on the cross because he did what his father asked of him. He died, nailed to the cross.

The more I have read and thought about Micah 6:8, the more I understand why the passage moves people. Justice, mercy and obedience to God are fundamental elements of compassion work and these three lead to true accompaniment. We need to step back and remember that accompaniment isn't in the papers, the documents or the statistics. Accompaniment isn't just in looking at what is wrong. And accompaniment isn't just in "walking with;" sometimes accompaniment means we need to be like a stone in someone's shoe: never giving up and even possibly annoying until change occurs — to all involved.

What does Micah 6:8 mean to you?

**PRAYER** Gracious Lord, what do you require of me, but to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with you? Fill me with the grace to follow that call, AMEN.

## God's Presence in Poverty

Arthur Schoonveld

Matthew 25:31-40

<sup>40</sup>"Whatever you did for one of the least of these ... you did for me."

Back in March 2005, Time magazine featured an article on "How to End Poverty." Inside were pictures of children sleeping on city streets and of a woman scavenging for food on a huge pile of garbage. According to the article, more than 20,000 people die each day because they are too poor to stay alive. At least 1.1 billion people in our world live in extreme poverty. After rereading that article the other day, I turned to Matthew 25, where Jesus says that the nameless millions who die each year represent him. He says, "I tell you the truth, whatever you [do] for one the least of these brothers [and sisters] of mine, you [do] for me." Jesus himself comes to us in these poor billions. He expects us to care, to help. What can we do? We can acquaint ourselves with some of the realities of poverty. We can find out about shelters in our immediate communities. We can set aside a part of our income to give for those who are poor. We can find a trusted organization to send donations. We can designate a part of our church budget to help the poor. Caring for the poor is not an option. As families and as churches, we may have to adjust our priorities. Someday Jesus will ask us, "Did you see me as you looked into the eyes of these brothers and sisters of mine? And what did you do for them?"

**Prayer:** Lord, forgive us if we have been living in abundance but have failed to reach out to poor people. Help us to see you in people who are in need. For your name's sake, O Lord, Amen.