

Week 4 – Mar 7-11

Helping Hands Gospel Mission has changed as needs change in our community. Where people were homeless due to a fire or losing a job, they are now homeless coming out of jail or prison, facing the demons of their addictions.



Homeless - Have you ever contemplated the homelessness of Jesus?

Written by S Benner

Matthew 8:20

“Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’”

This is more than just a metaphorical picture. Jesus didn't have a home. The Bible doesn't mention Him owning anything. In the midst of recording Jesus' teaching, Luke casually mentions that Jesus spent each night on the Mount of Olives, the hill outside Jerusalem.

Though the gospel writers give little attention to this fact, we dare not romanticize it. Surely Jesus did experience beautiful evenings in the olive grove, away from the crowds, with the stars shining overhead. But other nights it rained or even snowed. Sometimes cold winds blew. Jesus endured hard ground, darkness and loneliness.

How does Jesus' homelessness impact us? Though not a command that we must follow, it does require us to pause and think. Too often the desire for comfort drives me. Luxury and convenience become needs rather than wants. Material possessions clutter my focus and prevent me from seeking God. I stress about many things. Jesus owned nothing, yet He didn't worry about His next meal. He trusted God for everything He needed.

I also need to consider my attitudes toward others. Though Jesus likely trained as a carpenter, during the three years of His ministry He didn't work to provide for Himself or for His mother. Did people look at Him and say, “Get a job”? Jesus can help me see differently, because He knows what it's like to be homeless.

Prayer: Holy God, open my eyes to what you want to teach me through these verses. I want to trust You and not worry, to seek You instead of my own comfort, to see every person through Your eyes. Amen

"True Treasure"

Matthew 6:19-20

(Jesus said) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

The story begins about a month ago in Vancouver, British Columbia. This story centers around a homeless man who has asked that his name not be shared by the news organizations, which have been telling his tale. The public part of the man's account began when he found a suitcase on the street. Understand, this was not just any old suitcase; this was a suitcase with \$2,000 in it.

Now nobody can tell you whether the man was tempted to keep the money for himself. No, we don't know that, but we do know the homeless man took the suitcase to the police and turned it in. Later on, he explained: it was "the right thing to do." Now that story touched other folks and some of them began to raise money to help the homeless man. More than \$5,000 was raised to help give the man a new start.

Now nobody can tell you if that man had a "check list" of the ways that money could be spent. No, we don't know that, but we do know the homeless man declined the money for himself and asked it be given to a local homeless shelter. They contributors gave him time to reconsider. When they saw the homeless man the next day, he gave them a note. The note reaffirmed his desire to have the shelter benefit from the gift, but the man had now added a request.

He said he would sure appreciate it if someone might help him find permanent employment. By saying that, it shows he understood the old adage: "Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, you feed him for his life."

You know, I wish the rest of the world were as wise as this nameless, homeless man.

Think about it for a moment. We are like that man in Vancouver. We've got nothing. But then the devil and the world walk in and say, "You know, you'd be happy if you owned this or had that or" Well, they come up with a million things that are supposed to make us happy.

And those things might do the trick ... for a short time. But short-term satisfaction is not what we need. Short-term satisfaction doesn't change our circumstance or situation. What we need is something that lasts an eternity. Our happiness, hope and joy in life must be based on a gift that does not tarnish, which can't be lost or stolen.

And that's where the Lord steps in. He says, "Here is My Son. Believe on Him as your Savior; rely on Him and your life now -- as well as throughout eternity -- will be transformed. Not only will you be forgiven all your sins, you will also have the assurance that the Lord is with you and always listening to you. Believe on Jesus as your Savior and you will have a home in heaven and a seat at the eternal banquet.

Prayer: Dear Lord, grant that I have the wisdom to see the contrast between the time-sensitive gifts which are offered by the world and the devil and the eternal blessings which are provided by You, when we are given faith in the Savior. This I ask in His Name. Amen.

AWESOME

BY CHANDLER CARRIKER

Luke 5:26

Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.” (NIV)

There are many strange things around us in this world today. From the strangely absurd that many of us witness every night on reality TV, to the strangely beautiful creation that fills the depths of the ocean. Just think about how many times in a day you find yourself saying “Isn’t that strange?” or “That’s weird!”

While strange is easy to recognize, awe might be a bit more difficult. I know my use of the word “awesome” is just as commonplace today as it was when I, as a teenager, marveled at the discovery of a mint condition Ken Griffey Jr. rookie baseball card.

But what in our daily lives truly fills us with awe? The compassion of one child of God reaching out to another? The startling beauty of God’s creation at a moment we least expect it? What in your daily life has truly filled you with such awe that you have glorified God like these witnesses of Jesus in Luke?

Not long ago, I sat in awe alongside my colleagues as I learned the hopeful news that where malaria once claimed the life of a child every 30 seconds, then every 45 seconds, it has now slowed to every 60 seconds. That 15-second increment may seem minuscule, but it means thousands of lives are saved each day.

Receiving this news places us on sacred ground — where things seem strangely possible in a world that fills us with so much doubt. Sharing this news with you fills me with awe of God’s grace, working through God’s people to achieve a seemingly impossible goal. And we are! And our response to this wonder, to this miracle can only be to glorify God who has called us to this work and given us a spirit of healing to share with the world. Blessings to you as you join us in the work of bringing hope and healing to the world! May our work glorify the strange and awe inducing God who calls us out into the world to heal!

PRAYER God of wonder and awe, fill our lives with your presence so we may go and share with the world. Thank you for those times when you place us on sacred ground and give us the gifts to tell the world of what we have seen. In the name of your Son, Christ Jesus. AMEN.

PRESENCE

BY DAN RUTH

This devotion was written on the one-year anniversary of the Haiti earthquake.

Deuteronomy 31:6

"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." NASB

Until I met John's family, I had thought of Psalm 23 as "nice," but my faith had never had to really grapple with its true weight. I was working as a hospital chaplain and John was a 15-year-old patient, a twin. When I responded to the request for a chaplain on John's unit, I was pushed aside by nurses and surgeons, beeping carts filled with every instrument imaginable trying to stop John's congenital blood disease from stripping away his life.

Amid the noise and chaos of the hospital room, I noticed a small group of people huddled together at the end of the hall, their faces white with panic. John's family. Having no idea what to say or do, I trudged down the hall and introduced myself, quietly waiting for word from one of the doctors. We waited, and then waited some more. The only thing I could think of was Psalm 23. "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me..."

I never met John. In the hours following his death, I sat with his parents and his twin in the dimness of an abandoned waiting room. It was the darkest valley of their life. There was nothing I could say; there was no Bible verse to ease the pain of this untimely death. There was only the promise of God's presence there with them, walking alongside them.

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." -Matthew 28:20

The path to recovery in Haiti is a slow one. Over the past months, dozens of news accounts have criticized the lack of progress in the aftermath of last year's earthquake. With headlines like "World Turns its Back on Haiti" peppering our newsstands and computer screens, it's easy to give up hope.

PRAYER God of grace, you are here, and for that we give you thanks. You have walked with us through the hardest of times, and your lasting promise gives us life. Help us give the gift of presence to others when they need it, knowing that in your name we'll never abandon them. You restore our soul. Through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. AMEN.

COMPASSION

BY DANIEL LEE

Matthew 27:55

⁵⁵ *Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs.*

Have you ever wondered where Jesus and his disciples got their money? How this itinerant carpenter and a grisly group of fishermen funded their evangelistic escapades through first-century Palestine? Women made it possible.

We must assume other funding models were available for Jesus. He might have sought out better-heeled companions, applied for funding from the local Pharisee council or requested a grant from the regional magistrate. But he didn't. The nature of Jesus' ministry didn't mesh with financial support from the ruling class. To minister to the blind and broken, diseased and dying, lonely and lost, he chose a group of rural fisher folk, living on the shores of Galilee. And he chose women as his backers, most specifically "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee" (Matthew 27:56). These women made it possible.

When viewing ministry, we must also respond with a similar refrain: women make it possible. Certainly, many men contribute their time, money and talents to a ministry that provides food, shelter and a self-determined path out of poverty to millions of people. We celebrate the compassionate calling of all, lifting up our collective efforts to show mercy to all God's children.

At the same time, we also lift up those women who have made it possible. From raising the next generation of faithful Christians, to leading communities across the globe to grow food, dig wells and invest in their future. Our work in 35 countries depends on women. On college campuses and in congregations, women lead by example — drinking Fair Trade coffee, sewing quilts, wrapping Personal Care Kits, giving gifts and sharing their voices in advocacy. In all seasons, as we gather around dining and communion tables, we remember our callings and the divine compassion made incarnate in the Virgin Mary and the grace of the resurrection first witnessed by Mary Magdalene. These women made it possible.

PRAYER God, who chose a woman to deliver his Son, who called women to sustain Christ's ministry and who imparted to women the good news of the resurrection, likewise chooses us in birth, sustains us in life, and imparts good news to us to death. We remember the women of our lives, living and departed, who continue to guide our callings and exemplify the love of Christ in our midst. In Christ Jesus, who gives us life and love, AMEN.