



2021 Justice and Advocacy Week: Global Poverty

Paul Manning

Luke 10:25-37

Kristi is a 15-year-old girl living with her parents and younger sister in Bangladesh. She's not allowed to go outside or play with other neighbours or attend school regularly because she's part of an ethnic minority group with conservative views which place low value on girls as well as their education. Kristi regularly gets sick, due to an unvaried diet of mostly boiled rice as her parents cannot provide nutritious food on their income. Kristi's mum stays home and her dad is a labourer.

Recent estimates for global poverty are that 9.3% of the world live in extreme poverty. That is, Kristi and her family are among the 696 million people, living in extreme poverty on \$1.90 or less per day.¹ In Australia, we're blessed with living in a country overflowing with resources, making it hard to relate to poverty or to relate to Kristi and her family's struggles. This can result in poverty becoming invisible to us, or worst still the people, living in poverty being invisible.

Poverty, for most in the west anyway, is something we read about or see on a screen. Poverty is not something that has happened to us, nor something we have experienced first hand. But is poverty something that should matter to us? As followers of Jesus, does poverty matter?

The answer is a resounding Yes! Poverty matters because God instructs His people, in *Micah 6:8*, 'to act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly' with Him. In *Isaiah 1:17* and *Jeremiah 22:3*, we learn that as God's people we are to seek the welfare of those who are unable to fend for themselves; to show concern and care to the poor, widows, orphans and foreigners; we're to defend and seek the welfare of those who are most vulnerable to suffer from injustice. Then in *Proverbs 21:3* and *Amos 5:21-24*, we discover justice, doing what is right and just, is identified as a most acceptable act of worship. And perhaps most importantly, poverty should matter to you and I because poverty matters to God.

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it in the full." (*John 10:10*) Jesus makes clear He came to make it possible for each person to experience life in its fullness. However, poverty limits a person's experience to live life in its fullness, to fulfil their God given call, to flourish and to steward creation. Poverty obscures a person's intrinsic worth and dignity that is theirs by virtue of being made in the image of God.

During an encounter with a lawyer, Jesus makes it clear the priority for His followers; they are to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" *Luke 10:28*

¹ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/march-2021-global-poverty-update-world-bank>



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Then through the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:30-37*) Jesus makes clear His followers need to see and act in response to injustice; they need to treat all people equally - there are no exceptions.

This means the injustice of poverty does matter. As we see poverty, we need to act, we need to help those experiencing the injustice of poverty, no matter who they are or where they live.

The lives of those living in poverty are transformed when followers of Jesus see and act to help those experiencing the injustice of poverty no matter who they are or where they live. We have seen this for Kristi, her family and village who's lives were changed through the ministry of Baptist World Aid Australia. Kristi's father has faced his drug addiction and has steady work as a carpenter. Her mother has been trained in child nutrition, hygiene, the importance of child participation in the family and gained skills which helped her earn more income for the family. Kristi has learned how to protect against child abuse such as child marriage as well as adolescent reproductive health. She is able to go to school and has a new hope of becoming a nurse and serving her village.

Jesus ends the Parable of the Good Samaritan with the instruction in Luke 10:37b to "*Go and do likewise.*" So, we're left with the challenge to do just that : to SEE, to ACT, to TREAT ALL PEOPLE EQUALLY. We're left with the challenge to respond to the injustice of poverty, to making it possible for each person to live life in its fullness as God intended, to making A BETTER WORLD FOR ALL!

For Reflection:

1. Read *Psalms 82:3-4* "*Give justice to the poor and the orphan; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. Rescue the poor and helpless; deliver them from the grasp of evil people.*" What word or idea stands out to you; what is God saying to you?
2. Identify God's provision in your life; spend time thanking God for these provisions; then ask Him to reveal how He would have you use these provisions to respond to the injustice of poverty.

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