

Blessed, to be a Blessing

Like many of us, I began the new year reflecting on how richly blessed I am – how richly blessed we all are, as Americans – the comfort, the options, the freedoms, the wealth that we enjoy, take for granted, even feel entitled to..... we have *so much* to be grateful for!



Then my thoughts turned to the 25,000 children living in extreme poverty who will die **today** – due entirely to **preventable** causes....
25,000 children – yesterday, today, tomorrow – **every day**.
Does our Father love them less than He loves me, us?
Of course not.... something is terribly wrong here!

Over the past few years, I've begun to **wonder** over this massive **disparity**.... the incredible unfairness of it. Surely, this **abundance** that I am blessed with, it is certainly a **grace** – grace, in that I do not **deserve** this abundance from His hand – *any more than the children who will suffer and die today deserve their lot*....



And so, I have wondered about this accident of birth

Why am I so blessed, while others suffer so?

Yet I know that I, and my place in His world, am no accident.

So.....

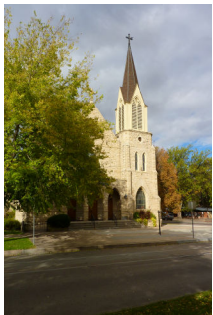
What.....?

What am I supposed to do with this?

Micah 6:8 distills it:

He has showed you, O man, what is good.... To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Might it be that God wants to use **me – us** – to bless these desperate mothers, these hopeless fathers, these suffering children?

And that is why I'm concerned for our Church in America.



The Lord, speaking through Ezekiel, had this to say to his chosen people:
“Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom – she and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and the needy.”
Picture the rich man passing the suffering Lazarus by at his gate each day....
The apostle John put it more personally: *“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”* John the Baptist boiled it down to terms a kindergartener would understand: *“The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same....”*

Friends, God has **entrusted** us with the comparative wealth that we enjoy in this country. Yes, we **are** wealthy; a \$35,000 income makes one wealthier than 95% of the rest of the world. Not surprisingly, the Church in America is the wealthiest, by far, in the world. God's Word assures us that we are not somehow entitled to this wealth -- *He has entrusted it to us.*

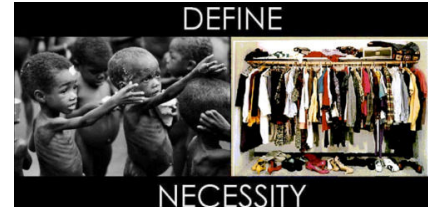


When He had placed Israel in the promised land -- a good land, like America – God reminded them that all the riches of this land were a gift, from His hand. And, He commanded them **not to harvest to the very edges** of their fields, but rather, to **leave some** for the poor, the alien, the widow, the orphan, the oppressed....



Have we packed our budgets so full, to the very edge, that we've nothing left to share?

We spent over \$700 billion on entertainment and recreation last year. And just one tenth of that amount would ensure that the world's poorest billion people have safe water, enough food, and basic medical care!



Friends, our Father in heaven **wants** to lift the poor out of their misery.

He lives to replace desperation with hope....

And, He has given us the incredible privilege of **partnering with Him** in His work.

Our Father has blessed us **to be** a blessing....

He has blessed us with **more** than enough to do it.... **Will we share?**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ: we have a lifestyle choice to make



*Created in our Father's image,
redeemed by Christ's blood,
called to be instruments of His love and grace:
we are indeed Blessed to be a Blessing.... we are Givers by Design.*