

Take-Home for Session 6: Stretch Out Your Hand to the Poor

If You Come Forward to Serve: An Inductive Study of Sirach

What We Found

- If the wronged poor man cries out even in bitterness, his Creator will hear his prayer (4:1-6): God stands guard over the defenseless in advance; mercy to orphans and widows makes a person like a son of the Most High (4:10), because children resemble their Father.
- Store up almsgiving in your treasury (29:12): alms are deposits, not losses, and Jesus locates the vault: treasure in heaven that does not fail (Luke 12:33-34), warning that the heart follows the treasure wherever it goes.
- Wealth is a test few pass (31:5-11): blessed is the rich man who is found blameless and does not go after gold. Money is a servant that campaigns to be a master; almsgiving demotes it.
- With every gift show a cheerful face (Sirach 35:9), and God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7), because giving is family resemblance, not taxation, and joy is proof the heart has begun to move where the treasure went.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Basil the Great

Preaching on the rich fool's barns, Basil delivered lines the Church has never forgotten: the bread you hold back belongs to the hungry, the cloak in your closet to the naked, the shoes rotting in your possession to the barefoot, the silver you have buried to the needy. For Basil, failing to give from surplus is not merely a lack of generosity but a kind of theft from the poor.

Homily on Luke 12:18, I Will Tear Down My Barns (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. John Chrysostom

Chrysostom told his people not to honor Christ in the church with silks while neglecting him shivering and naked outside in the poor. The Christ of the altar and the Christ of the beggar are the same Christ, he preached, and the second is the test of whether we have recognized the first.

Homily 50 on Matthew (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Teresa of Calcutta

The saint of the gutters of Calcutta said she saw Jesus in every suffering person, in his distressing disguise, and taught her sisters that in serving the poorest of the poor they were touching the body of Christ, doing it, as he said, to me. Her whole life was Matthew 25 taken literally.

Her letters, collected in Come Be My Light (paraphrased)

Live It This Week

- Make one deposit in the treasury this week that is large enough to feel: money, or hours, given to someone who cannot repay you.
- Give without seeking notice (Matthew 6:3-4), and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- Read Matthew 25:31-46 once, slowly, and pray: Lord, show me where you have been in my week wearing your distressing disguise.

Scripture Memory Verse

"Store up almsgiving in your treasury, and it will rescue you from all affliction." (**Sirach 29:12**)

Before Next Session

Read Sirach 15:11-20 twice, and bring your questions.

Catechism References

CCC 2443-2447; CCC 2448