

Mission: Social responsibility of the church

([Amos 2:4-8](#), [James 5:1-6](#), [Matt 25:31-46](#))

If we read today's scripture portions we find God being very angry at His people. But as a Father, God disciplines His people for their good that they may share in his holiness, like our earthly fathers who have disciplined us for our good. Today, God in His love and manifold mercy is giving us yet another chance to repent by showing us the areas in which we are failing Him. God has shown His people what is good and what He requires from them. From the beginning He wanted His people to act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with Him ([Micah 6:8](#)). He told them time and again that He would not be pleased by their animal sacrifices, their festive celebrations. Even now many have the same notions about spirituality. But today God is once again reminding us He is not interested in our Church attendance, our offerings or our celebrations of our festivals. ([Isaiah 1:12](#), [15](#), [Amos 5:21-22](#)).

Today God is showing us our social responsibility as His people. Jesus came in to this world to inaugurate God's plan of salvation. It is a plan of shalom to all .He had come to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim the freedom to prisoners, recovery of the sight to the blind, release of the oppressed and proclaim the jubilee year of Lord's favour when the people's debts will be written off ([Luke 4:18-19](#)). Firstly, Jesus launched out His ministry according to this manifesto in His body. Secondly, Jesus handed over to us His church that is His body to complete the task He had started. The Church is to be the salt of the earth and light of the world.

In the last week of May, the director of Native ministries, Bro. Edgar Sathuluri sent me to see the work that his workers are doing in fulfilling the

Great Commission according to [Matthew 28:19, 20](#) and [Acts 1:8](#). During the last twenty years many churches were established as a fruit of his ministry. Edgar called these churches Jerusalem churches and he asked the pastors of these churches to train people of their own churches and plant Churches in places (where there are no churches) at least seventy kilometres from the Jerusalem churches. He called them as the Judean churches. He also asked his workers to do the same in another district . He called these churches Samaritan churches. Likewise his workers are to go to the ends of the world i.e. another state or country. Bro. Edgar sent me to see some of the Judean churches planted by his workers. In all, I visited about 16 villages. Some of the villages are in the jungles of Badhrachalam of Khammam district. In these villages the power supply is for four hours only during the day. In some villages there is no drinking water. They have to walk miles to get two pots of drinking water. People are illiterate and ignorant of all basic principles of health. In such circumstances, I found the Judean Pastors' working sacrificially. The villagers in those villages do not have the basic amenities required for living. During that visit I felt how wonderful will it be if the churches in our cities can adopt some of these villages and provide them some of the basic things needed by the villagers. We can do it. But sadly we are not doing it.

The missionaries, who came to India, saw the immediate needs of the villagers and provided them first and after that they shared the gospel of good news. Today God is reminding us that hell is not made for us. It is for Satan and his followers. If some are going there, they are only responsible for it. But, God is showing in today's gospel lesson the spirituality that which makes us eligible for heaven. God is warning very harshly in today's epistle lesson those rich people whose God is their money. Through today's Old Testament lesson God is warning us not to stoop down to amass money and

try to become rich at the expense of poor and helpless.

**The Gospel lesson: [Matthew 25:31-46](#)
Let us be furnished unto all good works.**

In view of the topic to which this scripture portion is assigned we leave the prophetic elements in this parable. In this parable Jesus is making it very clear about who will inherit the kingdom of heaven and who won't and the fact of judgement in which everybody has to stand. The sheep on his right are the ones who are righteous and who will inherit the kingdom of heaven. Jesus reminded several times that those who keep all the external traditions like the Pharisees without bothering about the condition of their hearts are not righteous to go to heaven. He told that except our righteousness surpassed that of the Pharisees we would certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven ([Matthew 5:20](#)). Further we need to apply this parable keeping in mind the overall teaching of Jesus on the kingdom of heaven. However, we should not think that if one does all the things that Jesus specified in this parable without accepting his redemptive work on the cross one can go to heaven.

Jesus taught his disciples many times that by observing some rituals like Pharisees one cannot become righteous. Christianity is not a religion. It is way of life, the only way that makes us righteous and can take us to heaven. But today many are like the Pharisees and are still continuing in their own surmises. All our righteous deeds are like filthy rags ([Isaiah 64:6](#)). These won't take us to heaven. Only those who believe that Jesus took their punishment, curse and death on the cross and confess their sins and accept Him as their personal saviour, yes, only they will be justified as righteous and they alone go to heaven. However, here's the beauty of this

gospel lesson: those who are made righteous in this manner reflect this righteousness in doing good and righteous deeds like feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, showing hospitality to strangers, giving clothes to those who don't have them, looking after the sick, and visiting the prisoners. Often people find fault with the evangelicals and rightly so, as many evangelicals are only bothered about salvation without giving due concern for social action.

Then, there are some people who think that if they just do good works, i.e. without trusting Jesus Christ alone, they can go to heaven. But they can't. These days churches fail to recognise their social responsibility because they are not bothered about seeking God's righteousness by accepting the salvation offered in Jesus Christ. That is why the God who had disciplined the people of Israel is asking us now to change our ways and fulfil our social responsibility not to earn salvation but do good works since we are saved ([Eph 2:10](#)).

The Old Testament: [Amos 2:4-8](#)

Let us heed to God's warning

To day we find many who are getting money in the name of aid to the poor but are treating the poor just like the people of Israel treated the poor mercilessly in the 8th century. But they cannot escape God's judgement and punishment. God is reminding the same even through today's epistle lesson also.

The epistle lesson: [James 5:1-6](#)

Let us be aware of the evils of love of money.

Some one said 'God has only one son and He made Him a missionary'. That's true. Even Jesus Christ, though he was rich became poor that we can become rich. That is the model set by our Master ([2 Cor 8:9](#)). But today we find those who once were poor and yet, some, when they became heads of mission organisations how they are trying to become rich at the expense of the poor whom they are supposed to serve. We need not be bothered about that because we know their end "...their belly is their god and their end is destruction..." [Phil 3:19](#)). But let us be aware of how money can make people proud of themselves and make them despise the poor. Let not the rich be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God and do good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way we will lay up treasure for ourselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that we may take hold of the life that is truly life ([1 Tim 6:18-19](#)) . May God help us !

Life Application:

- In the past there used to be a conflict about the question of evangelism and social action but now it doesn't seem to be so any longer because evangelicals have come to a consensus in following terms observes Dr. John Stott in one of his latest books "The evangelical truth".
 - i) Social activity is a consequence of evangelism, because converts manifest their new life in service.
 - ii) Social activity can be a bridge to evangelism, because it often gains a hearing of the gospel.
 - iii) Social activity is a partner of evangelism, so that they are

'like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird'. For us in the public ministry of Jesus, so now words and deeds, proclamation and demonstration, good news and good works go hand in hand.

- Let us pray for those evangelists who are working among the poor in the Indian villages and think of how we can be involved in uplifting the conditions of those who are living in villages.
- Important application of the parable of sheep and goats is that the church as God's sheep or as God's chosen people should always be concerned about...
 - i) The poor who are starving, who are not able to get drinking water, who are lacking clothing. Heaps of clothes, saris and other clothes will be lying in our houses. We can start collecting them and go to the villages to give. Provide bore wells. Can't we? Yes, we can!
 - ii) Those who are sick. The church always can practice what Apostle James said to do in [James 5:14](#). Can't we go to those who are sick and pray anointing the sick with oil in the name of the Lord? Can't we? Yes, we can!
 - iii) Continuing with our hospital ministry. Can't we? Every All those of the churches who are in health care profession can go once in a while to those villages where there is no health care and provide medicines, spectacles, hearing aids and other accessories which the villagers can't afford to buy. Can't we do that? Yes, we can!
 - iv) The prisoners in the prisons. Many a church can start an

- effective prison ministry. Can't we? Yes, we can!
- v) Every church can afford to have old age homes, orphanages. Can't we?

Yes, we can. May God help us!

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