

Summary

This Advent sermon explores Jesus's declaration that he is the Messiah who came to "proclaim good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). The preacher emphasizes that while poverty is endemic to our fallen world and Jesus didn't eliminate material poverty, he addressed a deeper need—spiritual poverty. Through the account of feeding the 5,000 and Jesus's subsequent teaching about being "the bread of life," the sermon illustrates how Christ offers eternal sustenance that transcends physical hunger. The poorest people are those without salvation, regardless of earthly wealth, while those who know Jesus possess heavenly treasures. The sermon concludes by calling the church to be God's plan for addressing poverty through compassionate ministry, citing how Christian faith has historically birthed orphanages, hospitals, food pantries, and even Sunday schools (originally created for poor factory children in 18th century England). Christians are urged to be "openhanded" toward the needy, recognizing that spiritual and material needs are often intertwined.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you think Jesus showed compassion to the poor?
2. The sermon stated that it is not a sin to be poor. How do you react to that statement?
3. The sermon states that Jesus didn't make eliminating poverty his primary goal, but rather addressed spiritual poverty. How should the church balance meeting immediate physical needs with sharing the gospel?
4. In Deuteronomy 15:4 it says, "There should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you." What does it mean practically for the church to work to eliminate poverty from the family of believers as the sermon suggests? What would this entail?
5. How do you respond to the idea that "the poorest people alive today are the ones who have not been saved from their sins," even if they're materially wealthy?
6. The sermon mentions various ministries born from Christian compassion (hospitals, orphanages, Sunday schools, etc.). What contemporary needs might God be calling the church to address in similar innovative ways?
7. Reflecting on Deuteronomy 15:7-11, what does it mean to be "openhanded" rather than "hardhearted or tightfisted" toward those in need? Are there areas where you struggle with this?