

John 12:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

Analysis

Jesus states that the poor are always present, providing ongoing opportunity for charity, but His physical presence is temporary. This doesn't minimize poverty relief but establishes priorities: worship of Christ supersedes all other obligations when the opportunity arises. The statement also predicts His imminent death and departure. Post-resurrection, believers serve the poor precisely because they serve Christ (Matt 25:40), but during His incarnation, direct worship appropriately took precedence. This challenges both those who neglect the poor and those who neglect worship.

Historical Context

Poverty was endemic in first-century Palestine under Roman taxation and occupation. Jesus' statement echoes Deuteronomy 15:11, acknowledging poverty's persistence while establishing worship's priority.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do we balance worship of Christ with service to the poor?
2. What does this teach about seizing unique spiritual opportunities?
3. In what ways does genuine worship lead to service, not replace it?

Interlinear Text

τοὺς	πτωχοὺς	γὰρ	πάντοτε	ἔχετε	μεθ'	έαυτῶν	έμε	δὲ
G3588	the poor	For	always	ye have	with	you	me	but
	G4434	G1063	G3842	G2192	G3326	G1438	G1691	G1161
οὐ	πάντοτε	ἔχετε						
not	always	ye have						
G3756	G3842	G2192						

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 15:11 (Parallel theme): For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

Mark 14:7 (Parallel theme): For ye have the poor with you always, and whosoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

Matthew 26:11 (Parallel theme): For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

John 13:33 (Parallel theme): Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

John 12:35 (Parallel theme): Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

John 8:21 (Parallel theme): Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

Song of Solomon 5:6: I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

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