

Matthew 26:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always—Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 15:11 ('the poor shall never cease out of the land'), not to minimize concern for the poor but to establish worship's priority. The phrase *eme de ou pantote echete* (ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε) emphasizes His approaching death and bodily departure.

This isn't an excuse for neglecting the poor—Jesus Himself prioritized them. Rather, it's a recognition of redemptive-historical uniqueness. The incarnate Son of God stood before them for limited time. Missing worship opportunities by reducing everything to social utility profoundly misunderstands Christ's worth and mission.

Historical Context

Jesus spoke this two days before His crucifixion. After His resurrection and ascension, He wouldn't be physically present with the disciples. This was their final opportunity to honor Him bodily before His death. Mary seized the moment with prophetic insight.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's statement challenge the modern tendency to reduce Christianity to social activism rather than worship of Christ?
2. What 'moments of devotion' might you be missing by prioritizing good activities over the best thing—sitting at Jesus's feet?

Interlinear Text

πάντοτε	γὰρ	τοὺς	πτωχοὺς	ἔχετε·	μεθ'	ἐαυτῶν	ἐμὲ	δὲ
always	For	G3588	the poor	ye have	with	you	me	but
G3842	G1063		G4434	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 whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

John 12:8 (Parallel theme): For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

John 16:28 (Parallel theme): I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

John 14:19 (Parallel theme): Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

John 16:5 (Parallel theme): But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?

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.

Acts 3:21 (Parallel theme): Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Matthew 28:20 (Parallel theme): Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 18:20 (Parallel theme): For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

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