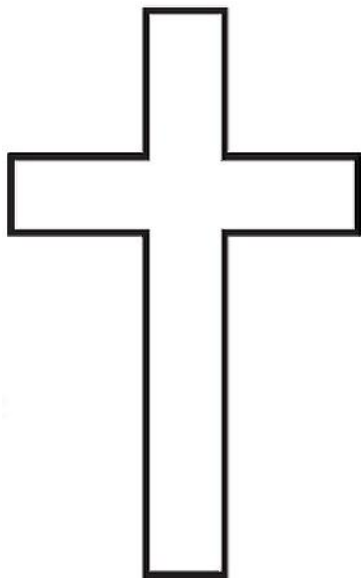


Good News for the Poor



**Jesus, my situation is hopeless.
Please help me**

www.goodnewsforthe poor.earth

I am poor. My family is poor. I can't pay our bills. My children no longer go to school because I don't have enough money for school fees.

When we get sick, we can't afford to see a doctor. Often we have only one meal a day.

Our rent is overdue. I am unable to pay back money I have borrowed.

No one wants to help me. My situation is hopeless. What should I do?

- * Beg for money in the street?
- * Try to win a lottery? * Steal and rob?
- * Engage in illegal activities to get money?
- * Join a revolutionary movement?
- * Use people-smugglers to go to another country to try to find work and money?

My situation is impossible.
Is there anything I can do?

What did **Gandhi** do?

When Gandhi was faced with an impossible situation, when he couldn't change external circumstances, he didn't resort to violence or criminal activities.

Rather, he looked inside himself, and changed internal circumstances.

He examined his heart, and improved himself by becoming a better person:
by becoming kinder, more forgiving,
more helpful to others,
decreasing negative/unkind/unclean thinking,
trying to clean his heart.

And what happened? As Gandhi changed internal circumstances, doors started to open. External circumstances started to change. Gandhi discovered that changing internal circumstances is a powerful way to change external circumstances.

What did **Mandela** do?

Mandela was in prison for 27 years in terrible conditions. Sometimes he did not receive mail for up to 6 months. Once he was put in a grave and guards urinated on him. His external circumstances were atrocious.

But he stayed positive. He kept working on internal circumstances, trying to improve himself by study, trying to help others, trying to forgive people who offended him.

His heart became ever more magnificent.

When he was released, he unleashed a tsunami of goodness and reconciliation in his nation.

What did **Jesus** teach?

Speaking to very poor people, people struggling to get enough food for each day, people living under a harsh Roman occupation,

Jesus did not say "fight the Romans".

He did not say "use violence to obtain justice".

He did not say try to win money at a casino.

He did not say steal from the rich. He did not tell people to focus on external circumstances.

Rather, Jesus challenged poor people

- to avoid greed and to increase compassion.
- to avoid lust and show mercy.
- to avoid aggression and practise forgiveness.

Jesus told the poor to concentrate on basic human values, to put internal values first, to focus on internal circumstances as a way of improving themselves and their world.

Jesus once made this incredible statement, spoken to poor and needy people:

"Stop worrying so much about food and clothing. Put God's values first, then food and clothing will not be a problem."

This is a revolutionary statement.

Some people might say "rich countries should do more to help poor countries like mine". Indeed they should. And rich people within poor countries should do more to help their poor fellow citizens.

But sadly, our troubled world is suffering from what Pope Francis calls "a globalization of indifference". **Lord, may the growing globalization of indifference and selfishness be replaced by a spreading spirit of compassion and care.**

Understandably poor people might say "Such ideas are just theory; they don't work in practice; how can such ideas help me put food on the table or help me pay school fees? My family can't eat ideas. Ideas don't pay school fees."

Well, check this story about **Sam**. Sam grew up in poverty in the Subcontinent. Despite working long hours, he and his wife could not provide for their four children. Not enough money for food. No money for school fees or medical bills.

Sam and his wife heard about the idea of improving internal circumstances as a way of improving external circumstances. Sam stopped smoking (he was a heavy smoker). He stopped drinking alcohol. He stopped gambling. He spent more time with his family. His wife stopped gossiping about her relatives and friends. She started helping an old woman living in their building who had no family. Each night the whole family prayed together with new trust in God.

Almost immediately things began to happen: sickness decreased in Sam's family. Sam himself became much healthier and was able to get a better job that paid better wages. His wife's care of the old lady won the admiration of a better-off neighbour who offered her a stay-at-home part-time job preparing food items for her canteen.

With the money from these new jobs, Sam and his wife were able not only to provide enough food for their children. They also were able to pay school fees for their oldest child. That child won the special respect of a teacher at school who personally paid the school fees of the second child.

When a relative of Sam's wife visited them from another part of the country, he was so impressed by the changes in their lives that he undertook to pay the school fees of the two other children. Sam and his family discovered that goodness begets goodness and brings about change for the better.

Warning:

Be careful of what's called the "prosperity Gospel" which says "believe in God and you'll become rich."

The only people enriched by this false teaching are the false pastors who use their congregations' donations to buy expensive cars, homes and airplanes. Like T. B. Joshua "the sixth wealthiest pastor in Nigeria."

Jesus never said his followers would become materially rich in this world. He did say they would have a treasure, in Heaven. He did say they would be provided for in this life and know peace in this life, despite persecution.

To inmates in an atrocious Colombia prison, Pope Francis said that even in such conditions the inmates have the capacity to improve things - like Mary who turned a miserable stable into a home for Jesus.

Sam and his wife also discovered that focusing on internal circumstances means getting off your butt and being pro-active. It does not mean sitting around dreaming and wishing for a magical solution to our problems.

This is not to say that all poor people are lazy day-dreamers. But some are. Some expect money and help to fall from the sky, without any effort on their part.

The Bible has many references to laziness, and in fact sometimes links laziness and poverty.

This might sound harsh to many people who have been born into poverty, sometimes a poverty caused by the callous policies of local or international governments and businesses. But the way to bring about change is not to sit around cursing my bad luck. Rather, I need to get off my butt and change my bad habits.

c.f. "*God Calling*", October 25:

The way of conquest over the material, the temporal, is learned by the conquest of the self-life in each of us.

Seek daily more and more to obtain this self-conquest, and you are gaining surely, though you may not see it, conquest over temporal forces and powers.

Unemployment would cease if man realized this.

If he has not work, let him make himself a conquering force, beginning with the conquest of all evil in himself, then in his home, then in all round him.

He will have become a force that will be needed, and *must* be employed.

100 years ago, scientists began speaking of the possibility of atomic energy.

Jesus' teaching about self-conquest is spiritual atomic energy. It can unleash energy in our lives that we never realized was possible.

Like Gandhi and Mandela we can discover and develop the transforming power of spiritual energy.

One key to harnessing this power is training our minds and hearts to avoid negative thinking; training our tongues to avoid negative speech.

Sitting around all day complaining about our situation is counter-productive: it just makes things worse.

Trying to become positive in our thoughts and speech is atomically productive!

Many spiritual writers point out that the highest form of "positive thinking" is praise of God. Praise ignites our personal reformation explosion.

c.f. "**God Calling**", October 16

Yes! Praise. That moment, in the most difficult place, your sorrow is turned to Joy, your fret to praise, the outward circumstances change from those of disorder to order, of chaos to calm.

The beginning of all reform is in yourself. However restricted your circumstances, however little you may be able to remedy financial affairs, you can always turn to yourself, and seeing something not in order there, seek to right that.

As all reform is from within out, you will always find the outward has improved too. To do this is to release the imprisoned God-Power within you.

That Power, once operative, will immediately perform miracles. Then indeed shall your mourning be turned into Joy.

"Why doesn't the government help me, as happens in other countries. Why is my government so corrupt and uncaring?"

One way to improve a government is to improve its citizens. If I can become a better person, then that will have a ripple effect and help my country to become a better place, even if I don't see any immediate short term effects.

If enough ordinary people practise self-improvement, society itself will gradually be improved and transformed.

One practical thing I can do: be punctual! In many places, people don't care about showing up on time for appointments, even for work (... "Africa time" ..).

How can a business, a country, progress if no one cares about being on time? Punctuality is one practical way of self-improvement everyone can achieve.

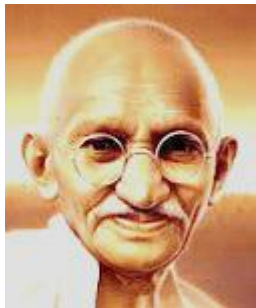
Don't say "prison". Say "university"!

After being away from his own country for 7 years, **Simon** was asked by his friends "What did you do in Hong Kong?". He answered "I was at university: for the first 2 years I improved my English by a lot of reading, always using a dictionary. Then during the last 5 years I took two university courses: one in English, one in small business management. Now I'm ready to re-start my life with the knowledge and skills I've learned."

Like Mandela, Simon's time of adversity became a time of blessing. As in the Chinese saying "Failure is the mother of success".

The whole text of this booklet, in English and Zulu, is at www.goodnewsforthe poor.earth

If you'd like to post at that website any comments about the ideas in this booklet, please email me: jdwomi@gmail.com



Be the change you want to see in the world

- Gandhi

Everyone can rise above their circumstances if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do

- Mandela

It's right to want enough, but not good to want to be wealthy. People who have a craving to be wealthy get trapped into foolish and dangerous schemes which ruin their lives - c.f. 1 Timothy 6.9

ISBN 978-988-12396-3-1

Second printing, December 2016

Printed in Hong Kong by Print Shop

www.printshop.hk

For private distribution only. Not for sale

Publisher: Fr John Wotherspoon O.M.I. 胡頌恆神父

Email : jdwomi@gmail.com Tel : +852 67095674

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God bless the kind friends who produced this book