

Home Group study: week beginning 9<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## **Jesus Christ: Dangerous Revolutionary 2**

### **5: Poverty**

There are many different definitions of poverty. How would you define 'poverty'?

Do you think 'poverty' has a different meaning in the UK from poverty in, say, a poor West African country?

#### **Read:**

#### **Deuteronomy 15: 1-11, 2 Corinthians 9: 6-15**

Let's look first at the Deuteronomy passage. What does it tell us about God's attitude to the poor?

#### **Discovery**

It seems very radical to us to think that debts should be cancelled every seven years.

Could our economy function on that basis? Can you think of reasons why God might command this? What does the second part of verse 2 say about it? How might we as Christians interpret that last phrase in verse 2?

Why do you think God gives them a different command for lending to 'foreigners'?

Look at v6. Why do you think God says Israel will lend to many nations and borrow from none? This verse suggests a connection between lending and ruling; what do you think that connection is?

God wanted Israel to be his special nation, set apart from other nations. However its people did not stick to God's expectations of them. Amongst many other things, such as worshipping the false gods, they did deals with other nations such as Egypt that they thought would help them financially. What was Israel's fate?

What does that tell us about being obedient to God's word?

How are we to deal with poverty? Does helping people in need sound like just a nice thing to do when we think about it, or is there more to it than that? What is to be our attitude?

Look now at **2 Corinthians 9: 6-15**. How does v7 compare with Deuteronomy 15: 10-11?

What does it suggest our attitude to helping the poor and needy should be?

Does anyone know the literal translation of the word 'cheerful' in v7? (*It means 'hilarious', so it's not just as case of being cheerful: it means totally overwhelmed with joy as we give.*)

What does Paul suggest are the rewards for generous giving?

If we don't want to take Paul's word for it, look at **Luke 7: 38**. What does Jesus manage to say in one short phrase about our generosity and, conversely, about our lack of generosity?

We may be worried about the effects on our own finances if we give too generously.

But what does Paul say about that in verses 10-11? Do you believe God will make us rich as we give out generously? Why does God want to make us rich (v11)? And what is the final outcome of our generosity with the riches God gives us?

### **Understanding**

As was pointed out on Sunday, God's people increasingly ignored the instruction to look after the poor and even exploited poor and needy people. God makes it clear he regards this as injustice, and just as God is the God of love he is also the God of justice. We see him moving from a place of matter-of-fact and even quite friendly instruction in Deuteronomy to a place where he is so angry that he even allows Jerusalem, his Holy City and a place symbolic of God dwelling with his people, to be destroyed.

Whatever was our definition of poverty at the start of this study, we know that more poverty and need is just around the corner in our own locality, as redundancies are a certainty over the coming months. We are rich people in one of the richest nations on earth, and elsewhere in the world already horrendous poverty is becoming even worse right now.

How do we as Christians need to respond to this unfolding situation? We may feel we are few in numbers and can't do much to relieve poverty and need: but we need faith that God will multiply our efforts. We may feel we can't spare much: but remember God's attitude to people who do give generously.