

Title: No Poor Among You

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 15:4-11

There should be no poor among you, for the Lord your God will greatly bless you in the land he is giving you as a special possession. You will receive this blessing if you are careful to obey all the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today. The Lord your God will bless you as he has promised. You will lend money to many nations but will never need to borrow. You will rule many nations, but they will not rule over you. "But if there are any poor Israelites in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them. Instead, be generous and lend them whatever they need. Do not be mean-spirited and refuse someone a loan because the year for canceling debts is close at hand. If you refuse to make the loan and the needy person cries out to the Lord, you will be considered guilty of sin. Give generously to the poor, not grudgingly, for the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do. There will always be some in the land who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share freely with the poor and with other Israelites in need."

Deuteronomy 15:4-11 is a fundamental topic that occupies the mind of many in this world, even, the children of God. Wherever one goes today, whatever nation one visits, one is impressed by the extremes of poverty and wealth. This is true in Europe, Asia, South America, the United States, wherever one goes. On one side of town there is extreme poverty and on the other side of town there is extreme wealth. Compare BGC to Tondo. This is also true when comparing between countries: for instance, Switzerland verses South Sudan. Switzerland GDP per capita is \$93,000 whereas South Sudan GDP per capita is less than \$1000.00. It is declared that Burundi daily wage is a few cents. This is the result of the sin of man. One can blame certain individuals, of course, but the basic cause is the sin of man. If man had obeyed God in this respect, there would have been no poor among them. There will be a balance of wealth. It was said that many wars started because of income inequality: Poor against the rich. The majority are the poor; the minority are the rich. This is also a common phenomenon in our world today. What started communism. Because the poor were exploited by the rich. So chronic poverty is prevalent in this world.

Deuteronomy 15:4-11 gives God's vision for a just and compassionate society where poverty is addressed through generosity, release of debts, and openhearted care for the poor. How does God address the **'No Poor Among you'** in our church.

1. God's ideal: No Poverty

'There will be no poor among you' states the ideal situation. This is a statement that God is giving to the church today.

God desires a society without poverty, made possible through His blessing and obedient living. The society addressed is the community of God's people. To put in relevant context, this society is of course, the people in the church. In ancient Israel, God established an economic system in which no one had to be chronically poor. If people would obey the LORD, He would bless them (both sovereignly and because of their obedience), and there would be little chronic poverty in Israel. God applies the same principle to the church people. Let us apply it to the people in the house of God. My family once, worshipped idols. No matter how many gods we prayed to, my family was poor. If you want to be poor, pray to idols. My daily meals were porridge with black sauce. My dad was a fisherman in the beginning before he became a

truck driver. So, he would at times bring fishes for my family. That stopped when he started as a truck driver. My flat had only two rooms: one for my parents and another for my 4 sisters. We brothers, had to sleep in the living hall. We did not have our own room. During the afternoon, I would go to my parents' room to take nap. I remembered there was a cousin that had no home to go to. My mum was so generous to allow him to stay with us, despite our already difficult situation. He too, slept with us in the living hall. Of course, during those days, as we were very small, we just accepted our lot in life, assuming that was the condition for everybody in this world. I never had a toy given to me in my entire life. I never had birthday celebration. I was experiencing what we call today, chronic poverty. I would like to say that many Filipinos experienced what we call chronic poverty: a condition in which individuals or households remain in poverty for an extended period – often for many years, decades, and even across generations. It is not just a temporary lack of income, but a deep persistent form of poverty that is difficult to escape. In the latest SWS 2025 trends, 55% of Filipino families considered themselves poor (mahirap). This equated to 15.5 million families (not people but families). Mindanao had the highest rate at 70%, followed by Visayas 67% and 45% Luzon. What drives this

Chronic Poverty.

- Low education
- Limited or fragmented assets
- Dependence on low productivity, especially agriculture, fishing
- Large household size and high dependency ratios
- Disaster (earthquake, typhoon), conflict, and vulnerability (sicknesses) which disrupt income and access to services

All these structural barriers limit social mobility, leaving many unable to break the poverty cycle.

All these statistics are real and prevalent in the Philippines. Not just the Philippines, but the world.

I have just painted to you the real picture of the world where the majority are in the cycle of poverty. But that is not true for us. Yet as Christian, Jesus had broken the curse of poverty. That is how beautiful Jesus is. I testify that my chronic poverty started to be broken the day I came to know Jesus. Of course it was not overnight, but surely and clearly, I began to see the great changes in my family and my own personal life. I too believe that many of you especially, those that had come to know God in this church, experienced the same miracles as I. Because, as I say, God's ideal is no poor among

you. This phrase, **'no poor among you'** holds true in my own personal life. But this ideal is more theological than historical or factual, even among God's people in the church. Many Israelites lost their family lands. There were always poor among the Jews. **Deuteronomy 15:11**, just a few verses later, states: **'For the poor will never cease from the land.'** This is ironic. Yet this is not a contradiction. God established a system where no one must be chronically poor, yet He knew that because of disobedience, there would be some chronically poor people in Israel. Let us bring in our lives to apply to this truth. What is stated in God's ideal in **Deuteronomy 15:4-7**.

- A. **'The Lord your God will bless you.'** You will not be poor because the LORD your God will bless you. The day Jesus came into your life, God has started blessing you. This is mentioned twice in Deuteronomy 15 for emphasis. This blessing is sovereign. It means that God alone has the ultimate authority, the say, and freedom to give His blessings according to His own will, not based on human effort, merit, or manipulation, because of Jesus. It is wonderful to be a child of God. Because of Jesus, we are adopted children of God, opening door for God's blessings upon us.

B. **'You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow.'** This outlines the blessings we will receive if we obey his commandment. You will lend; a sign of abundance and prosperity. You can only lend when you have more than enough. **'Not borrowing'** means you are not in need. Here God promises financial strength, economic independence, and blessed surplus. This points to we being the head and not the tail. Of course, this blessing is conditional. It comes as a result of obeying God. The reverse is also true in the curses: disobedience leads to becoming borrowers and servants. The phrase 'a borrower is servant to the lender' comes from the Bible, specifically **Proverbs 22:7**. A borrow is a debtor. Are you a borrower or a debtor? When you borrow, you are obligated to the lender. You must repay, often with interest, and this can limit your freedom. The lender has power over you – dictating terms, setting deadlines, and potentially taking legal action if you default. It is so sad that many children of God are in the chains of debt. We live in a culture that normalizes borrowing: credit cards, loans, buy now pay later, housing mortgages. This is not about money. It is about bondage, foolishness, and slavery. We thank God we are blessed in life but even we

make a law not to borrow, especially in our old age.

- C. **'You will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.'** If there is really a Christian nation in the world, it is America. Of course, the backsliding of America is abhorrent today and the curses had already started to take place. In the bible, 7 world empires were mentioned and they are Gentile powers, starting with the Egyptian Empire and ending with the Revised Roman Empire: 7 in all. But America was never one of these 7 Gentile powers. A question is frequently asked? 'Where is America in the bible? America is the only power in history that is a Christian nation. America is founded upon God's purpose to show if an empire obeys God it would prosper. You cannot argue that the early founders or pioneers of America knelt in prayer, especially in moments tied to the founding or dedication of the nation. It was said that when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, they are recorded as kneeling in praying, thanking God for their safe passage. In 1620, William Bradford, leader of the Plymouth Colony, wrote about their deep dependence on God. They sought to establish a society where they could worship freely, making prayer a foundation for

their settlement. What happened? They grew and grew until they became the most powerful nation in the world. Their economy is the largest in the world. Their military is the strongest in the world. Their wealth is the biggest in the world. I mean you literally see **'you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you,'** come to pass before our eyes. As with a nation, so with an individual. Of course, we are witnessing the collapse of a powerful nation. Curses have taken place because of covenant disobedience. It is always the same individually.



2. Causes of Poverty among God's people

God called us to obedience. If we obey Him, poverty would be eliminated.

I do not want to dwell on poverty in our society, like Iloilo City. But I want to concentrate on God's people. God did not unconditionally guarantee prosperity for Israel, either on a national or individual basis. The LORD did guarantee the opportunity for prosperity for an obedient Israel. Likewise today, if an individual obeyed, he or she will enjoy the blessing of God's prosperity. He or she would be prosperous, and be blessed above others. He or she would have the resources to lend, instead of having to borrow.

The ideal is possible but not proven true among God's people. **Verse 15** gives the reason: obedience to the covenant.

- A. **'If only you listen obediently.'** This verse was written in intensity. I have just finished the book of Deuteronomy in my devotion. I can feel that intensity from God, through Moses in this book. God is reminding, telling to remember and not to forget. Truly Deuteronomy is written in intensity; 'if only you listen obediently.'

B. **'To observe carefully all these commandments.'** YHWH's covenant promises are conditional on continuing obedient response.

Poverty will always exist due to human sin, inequality, and disobedience. In the New Testament, spiritual disobedience has consequences that lead to poverty-like conditions:

- Sinful living leads to brokenness, addictions, and loss. Many Christians assume poverty is only caused by external factors – lack of opportunity, economic downturn, or oppression. But scripture also speaks of spiritual causes, including disobedience to God. Unlike the Old Testament, where poverty was often a covenant curse, the New Testament teaches that though poverty is not always a sign of sin (e.g. poor Lazarus), however patterns of sins and disobedience can still lead to lack, not just materially but emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. Some Christian are poor by choice, because of the Gospel, like Jesus, but they never had lack.
- Ignoring biblical principles of stewardship (tithing, giving), generosity, and work ethic

can also lead to financial hardship. **Gal 6:7** says, 'Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.' Disobedience to what belongs to God (tithing) and what belongs to others (hoarding, instead of caring for the poor, especially those in the household of God is a sin.

3. Open hands and open hearts

Deuteronomy 15:11 says, '**There will always be some in the land who are poor.**' Jesus understood this truth where he said, '**The poor you will always have with you.**' The sad truth is that there is poor among us. '**There should be no poor**' is ideal but not in reality. So how to react? **Verse 7** says, '**Do not be hardhearted or tightfisted.**' It symbolizes emotional and financial resistance to helping others. **Verse 8** says, 'be openhanded and freely lend,' is not optional but part of covenant faithfulness to God. **Verse 9** says, 'don't harbor this wicked thought' is a sin rooted in greed and lack of trust in God's provision. Because if this '**needy person cries out to the Lord, you will be considered guilty of sin.**' What is God calling out?

- A. Generosity toward the poor. God commands compassion, not just pity.

When someone is in needs, you are to open your hand – freely, without hesitation. The command to open your hand is repeated and emphasized. The phrase 'do not harden your heart or shut your hand' is both a heart attitude and a practical action.

- B. Generosity is not optional in God's kingdom. It is a command rooted in justice and mercy. Care for the poor is both moral and spiritual.
- C. No selfish excuses. God anticipates a selfish loophole: someone thinking, 'If I lend now, the debt will be cancelled in the 7th years.' They will say, 'they will not pay you back.' God calls this 'a wicked thought' and warns against withholding help just because it might not benefit you financially. God warns against selfish calculation.
- D. Lifelong command to give freely. Giving is ongoing because the need is ongoing. Let us be honest here. I do get tired of giving. You can give until you get discouraged. You can say that people are like bottomless pit. But then God spoke to me that I am

wrong. Because if I am truly a child of God, the lifelong command is to give freely. Because the need is ongoing too. But God told me that I had to be fair to him too. Because the returns are exponential. The returns are also ongoing. The heavens would open and God would pour out a blessing that there is no room to contain it. Just remember one thing. You cannot bring one physical thing with you in heaven. Naked you come, naked you shall return. Let us not be greedy but generous. Clovis Chappell, the noted authority on preaching, tells in one of his books about the excavation of Pompeii some years ago. The city was destroyed by the eruption of nearby Mount Vesuvius. The huge quantity of falling ash literally fixed people in mid-motion for centuries. Chappell noted that one woman's feet were turned toward the city gate, and her face had turned back toward something behind her. Excavators discovered that at the moment of her death she was reaching for a bag of pearls. Although her life was at risk, she thought so much of her pearls that she could not bear to live without them. She was literally frozen in an attitude of greed.

The poor in the church.

The poor and needy are not in a hopeless situation. The poor and needy are the special concern of God and the covenant family (the people in the church) are expected to ensure the welfare of every member of the family. Israelites law was framed to protect the underprivileged, the marginalized, the malnourished.

Who then is this needy poor mentioned in **verse 9?**

- **'One of your brothers.'** The Mosaic Law shows YHWH's special concern and mercy to other poor covenant brothers/sisters. I am proud that we reacted rightly especially toward Pastor Sheila Sampani. We did not misrepresent God. The church members in Barbaza, the many pastors that attended the wake and burial in Barbaza, did not say, 'So that is the result of giving your life to the mission field.' At the end of the burial, Pastor Sheila's two sisters, who were quite hostile and distant towards me, waited for me at the end of everything, specially and stretched out both hands to grab my hand and say, 'Thank You so much Pastor.' This church has given a lot in the past one year to Pastor Sheila. When she had cancer, we did not say, 'please go and rest in your home,' 'we will pray for you.' No, we welcome here into our community for one

year. We inquired throughout the year concerning her conditions. We raised money as a church, individual members helped. We paid for the camp fee for the whole family. We helped her not only financially, spiritually, and emotionally and socially. Why? Because she is 'one of your brothers.' 'You shall not harden your heart' is motive. 'Nor close your hand' is deed. Notice **Deuteronomy 15:8** says, 'you shall freely open your hand to him,' includes 'you shall open your hand wide.' Your benevolence shall be in proportion to his distress and poverty, and your ability. You cannot use any other rules to regulate this charity. Instead, you shall lend him generously and lend him sufficient for his need. This denotes enough to meet the brother's needs, not just a token in passing. Deuteronomy uses the word, 'beware.' There are covenant consequences for obedience and disobedience. YHWH here warns of 'base thought.' The word 'base' is from the same root as 'Belial.' It refers to a 'worthless,' 'thoughtless,' 'evil person.' God view you as a person that is evil and mean. Sometimes I look at people. Their lives are peaceful, calm, and full of riches and blessings. Could it be that behind that person is one that is generous especially to the poor, weak and disenfranchised. Then I look at our

own lives and we are ok, but we do not feel really blessed inside us. Could it be because someone has come into your life and you did not help. Because the bible says it is a sin. And he cried to the LORD against you? If that is true, then it will be a sin in you.

Pastor Lily heard about the situation concerning the family of the Desuyos. The father who was a pastor died during the COVID-19. To be honest, I was shocked when I saw the appearance of Sis Desuyo, recently. I mean she was pleasant and had a nice countenance when I met here numerous times before COVID-19. But she really looked different now. Well, we can feel for her. We can pity her. We can say, 'let just pray for her.' I think it is wrong. She is 'one of your brothers.' I am blessed by Pastor Lily when she said after the collection of our faith pledge, that when the money comes in, immediately release the money for the Desuyos' family. Our society law code favored the elite, the wealthy, and the royal. We must favor the weak, socially, and economically deprived, legally vulnerable and disenfranchised.

In conclusion, God sent Christ, the greater man and his life echoes this teaching in **Matthew 26:11**, '**The poor you will always have with you.**' He tells us to give and lend without

expecting anything in return, because God Himself is merciful. Yet Christ became poor so that you might be rich. He died at the Cross so that this verse can be fulfilled, 'I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly.' He paid for our sin of disobedience, so that the curse of poverty can be broken. Today Jesus' death has made possible for you to be rich in all aspect. And he still cares deeply for the poor and expect you to do the same. Generosity is tied to faith – trusting that God will provide and bless. Giving is not a moral action but a responsibility.