March 14/15, 2009

Walking with the Poor

James 2:1-16
Pastor Mark Kremer

This morning we sang that last song, and I think there's a real sense that we all believe that, that there is no other name that has the power to save but the name of Jesus. But I wonder what stands in the way for some people even being able to hear or understand that truth? Is it being homeless, having an empty stomach, not having a job, not having anyone in your life or circle that cares about you enough to prevent you from even being able to hear that message?

If you opened up your Journal Star on Wednesday morning this week, you would have read a story that, while we were in worship last weekend, was unfolding for a family here in Lincoln, a family of five that was evicted from their home and had no place to go. They went to the city mission, which over the weekend was full; their only option was a place on the floor in some remote part of the mission. Thinking that was not best for their family, they took up residence in their van. And this week a family of five makes their home in a van in a parking lot in northeast Lincoln. On Monday morning they called the school, a number they had been given by the mission, and asked if somebody could send a cab or someone to pick up their children at their new home in their van, and that they would be back to that same parking lot in the afternoon so the kids could be dropped off again. In Lincoln, Nebraska.

God didn't intend life to be like that for anyone. We go back to Genesis Chapter 1 and 2 and we see this incredible paradise that God created for us to enjoy, where everything good that one could want and need in life was there. There was an intimacy with God. There was intimacy between people. There was Shalom, the Old Testament word for peace, justness, rightness. Everything was right in the world. But when sin entered the picture by our own choice, corruption, domination, disease, and destruction became commonplace in our world and mankind has suffered, abused one another, dominated each other, and fought ever since.

But God is a God of love and compassion. God is a God who wants to redeem and restore and rebuild. In the Old Testament He did that by calling out a people for Himself who would be different. God has called us as His people to be different, and we want to talk this morning about how we are to be different in our response to the needs of the world.

One of the people who has really helped our church, that you may not even know has helped our church, and has been helping all of the evangelical churches in our community get a better handle on what God has called us to be as His people is Robin Eschliman, who has been on our city council for the last four years. She and her husband Ted, who was just playing the mandolin up here, are part of our church. I'm going to ask Robin to come up and join me for just a couple of minutes and let her share with you some of what she's been discovering about the needs within our own community and how we can respond to those needs. So, Robin, come on up and join me. Thank you for doing that.

You know, I don't know what your view of people who serve on the city council is, but I would tell you this has got to be the most thankless job in the world. There is no real sense of a privilege, I think, with this role. If you have a neighbor's dog that's bothering you, call the city councilperson. If you have a neighbor's wife who's bothering you, call the city councilperson.

Every problem in the world gets brought to the city councilperson. So this is a thankless job, but anyway, thank you for that! But I would say you know there are two things, Robin, that are not at all related to your job description as a city councilperson that you have done that I think have just been God moving in your heart. One is that you called all of us, as evangelical leaders and organizations, to join with city agencies about a year ago, in a conference, to talk about how we could partner together to meet the needs of our city. And you have sought to engage the people of God, because we have something more than just food and shelter to provide. We have a message as well, and you have done a significant work in bringing us into the picture and sort of paving the way on both ends, and we really appreciate that. Then secondly, you may not know this, but Robin is the whole brainchild behind Project Serve and involving all of us. Over 3,000 people went out on a Saturday last October, which will be the first of what will become an annual event, and you worked very hard to not only find the projects, but engage the churches, and so just a word of thanks and appreciation to you from all of us for that. (But now about my neighbor's dog…)

Robin, why is it that the poor and the needy have become so important to you? And what have you learned and seen just from these last years that has impacted you?

Robin:

> "So much of what city council, so much of what government, does is mop up messes caused by poverty issues. A lot of our city budget involves, you know, the police department. A lot of time is spent by them on kids who don't have any place to go after school, or get adequate daycare. The police of course deal with a lot of alcoholism and its problems, and that goes back to an addiction, a spiritual problem. A lot of our health and human services on the city, county and state levels deal with poverty because of single parent homes. It's a huge problem. And that all ties back to the spiritual guidance that the church gives on, you know, long-lasting marriages and staying together and things like that. In my opinion, I think that Lincoln is a very generous community. And in studying some of the other communities our size, we do pretty well with poverty, and we have been making real good headway this last decade to reduce that. In 2004 the poverty rate was 14.5% and, by 2007, it had dropped to 11%. We had great partnerships with our nonprofit communities and pretty good communication. We had a thriving economy and that really helped. But that's still one out of ten people. And what we're seeing in the last few months with the recession, and probably the last six months, some of the nonprofits are reporting more calls to them for assistance with paying that mortgage or paying that housing bill. And since December there's been no movement at all from people getting out of Section 8 housing and graduating on to the next level."

So the needs are still there?

Robin:

> "Yes. And probably when we get the new census data out, that will provide a snapshot with how we've done in the last decade."

Any particular stories or situations specifically you've seen that kind of touched you?

Robin:

> "You know, whenever we make cuts to the bus system we hear from people. And the city council has really had to struggle with the declining ridership and having to subsidize the bus system, even more the last few years. It's really hard for us to run mass chunks of transportation when we don't have masses of people. But what we have found is when we make those cuts, the people that come forward to object to it aren't, you know, my neighbor down the street or the people in the next subdivision. The people that come are people in the wheelchairs, people who are mentally disabled, people who can't afford a car. And we had one lady who wrote us a letter and she said, "For me to go to the doctor, if we cut the bussing in the middle of the day, I'm going to have to get to the doctor and get back by 10:00 o'clock in the morning. Otherwise I'm going to have to find something to do until 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon. I'm not going to get any lunch because I'm completely dependent on this bus to get me to the doctor and back home again." So every year during budget time we really struggle with this whole thing. And we were making cuts one summer and trying to decide how drastic they should be. And there was a verse from Proverbs that began haunting me. And that verse is Proverbs 3:27. "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it is in your power to act." And I could tell I was going to be a swing vote between really, really drastic cuts and a little bit more mild cuts. But I changed my thinking about the bus system and I quit thinking about it as the mass transportation system that isn't effective to really helping human services. And this is something we're going to have to figure out to get these people where they need to go."

Interesting. These are things that we probably don't even think about, how all of those things affect people. How can the churches, and specifically even individual Christians, be involved or get involved in helping people?

Robin:

> "Well, one would be actually in the marketplace. This church has a lot of business people, so a lot of people out in the marketplace are in a supervisory position or a management position, or you own a company. And the way you *float the boat* for this community, is when you hire people, when your company creates jobs. And I know that's a challenge right now, but it's what we need more than anything right now, as unemployment is rising, is for you to take that leap of faith if your company is still in the growth mode, and hire people. That's really what we need the worst right now. But the other thing that people in the church can do is engage with one of two things: Either the city departments that are looking for volunteers for various things, or in the nonprofit communities, which are very well organized in our city and have wonderful opportunities available. So we have a booth in the back, the Church Unleashed booth, which is right out this direction back here, and you could sign up for one of those two opportunities. There's a website where you can pick up information for volunteer partners, and they post all of the volunteer opportunities for all of the agencies in the city, all of the nonprofits. Also you can sign up to receive an email with a list of all the city departments that need help. The Parks Department needs your help. The Aging Department really needs your help. And I can email you a list of volunteers at the city level."

Well, Robin, thanks for sharing your life with people in the city of Lincoln, and thanks for being of help to us in really being more unleashed for God's purposes. So we appreciate you. Thanks very much.

Robin:

> "I'm so proud of this church for making this effort and really seeking to educate the congregation. I really appreciate it."

Is it a big deal to God that people's needs are met? Is this a side issue, a secondary issue, or is this of prime importance to God, that people's needs be met in a holistic way—spiritually, emotionally and physically?

When God called out to the people of Israel to be the people of God, and to bring a sense of the restored kingdom to the earth in a tangible, physical way, He made it very clear to the nation of Israel how they were to care for the poor, the needy, the orphan, the widow, the prisoner, and the indebted. And He laid out those principles, those guiding laws, in the book of Leviticus. You can read Leviticus 19 and see how meticulously God laid out a plan for the nation of Israel to demonstrate something different to the world, as the people of God, in how the people within the nation of Israel would be cared for. And one of the primary things that the prophets spoke against the nation of Israel, was their fulfillment of these very laws and principles that were not being carried out.

Listen to just a couple of these passages. You will see them on the screen in just a second. Isaiah, chapter 1, Isaiah said to the people:

> **"Remove the evil of your deeds from my sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Reprove the ruthless. Defend the orphan. Plead for the widow."**
> (*NASB, Isaiah 1:16b-17)

Again, Isaiah 10 said:

> **Woe to those who enact evil statutes and to those who constantly record unjust decisions, so as to deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor of My people of their rights, so that widows may be their spoil and that they may plunder the orphans.**
> (vs.1-2)

There were people in the nation of Israel who were literally taking advantage of the least for their own purposes and God pronounced judgment on them. Alan read earlier from Isaiah 58, again verses 6-7:

> **"Is this not the fast** (or we might say is this not the kind of worship) **which I chose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"**

Think of the totality of that, that God said, "W*hat I desire for you is a life of compassion, a life that begins at home, fully engaged with your own family. Don't hide yourself from your own family. Take care of your own first. But then feed the hungry; care for the orphan; defend the widow. Seek for a just society where people are treated with dignity and worth, because they are created in the image of God."*

The New Testament church now has become the visible representation of the kingdom of God on earth. We are the representative of God in the way that we treat one another. The way we care for one another is to be a light into the world of how God's kingdom is different from the kingdom of the world that doesn't care about people, that abuses people, that neglects people, that abandons people. We are not to be that way towards one another.

Consider Philippians, chapter 2:

> **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.** (vs. 3-4)

A foundational principle of life in the body of Christ is that we are not to just look out for ourselves. One of the big challenges in a very individualistic culture is that we've taken our faith now and made it individualistic. It's about me and my relationship with God and feeling good about my relationship with God and having God bless me and take care of me and honor me, and all of the other things. It's a very selfish worship. But Jesus said, "*No, we're to be looking at the interests of others, and it's even more important than our own personal interests. We're to care for others. We're to think about them. We're to be actively involved and engaged in their lives."*

Galatians 6:9-10:

> **Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.**

It has to start with us within the church taking care of each other—the orphan, the widow, the hungry, the needy, the prisoner.

1 Timothy 6:17-18 says:

> **Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.**

Many of you this morning would say, "Well, I'm not in the category of the rich." When you look at the world, we are all, almost to a person, rich and we're instructed by God, as the people of God, to be ready to share, to give what we have, to do good works, to be involved in each other's lives, to take care of each other within the family of God.

Finally, 1 John 3:17:

> **But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?**

That's just a very small sampling. I would compare this to what we discovered about five or six years ago when we realized that we had never, as a church, talked about money. And then you begin to look at the Scriptures and realize it's right to talk about money: how it's to be managed,

who it belongs to, what its uses are, and the Scripture is full of conversation about how we are to respond to the needy, the poor, the widow, the orphan. It is a significant and is a part of what God is talking to His people about. And as we saw in Isaiah 58, it is something that we will give account for—what we actually did to go to the fringe, to go to the edge, to meet the most needy among us.

I want to look, just for a few moments this morning, at one particular passage, and if you have your Bibles, turn with me to James, Chapter 2, because he talks about an attitude that was prevalent in the early church where there was not the right kind of compassion. There was not a sense of equality and equal care and concern for all people within the church. We saw the same thing in Corinthians in our study, where in Corinth there was a division in the people, a lot of times along class lines or socioeconomic lines, and God confronted that through Paul there. And James is saying the same thing here. James chapter 2, verse 1:

> **My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?** (James 2:1-4)

What was happening in these churches is that people were, as the word *favoritism* shows, they were turning their eyes up or looking up to giving special attention and favor to the wealthy, the powerful and the elite. They were getting a special privilege. They were coddled and cared for in a way that no one else experienced within the church, while the poor were looked down upon and judged and thought of as insignificant and worthless. And that was not an appropriate attitude to have—an attitude of judgment and division, of assessing on appearance or on any external thing, someone's value and worth. All in the church have an equal value before God, and we are to honor one another in that way. And James said there should be no place for favoritism or partiality within the church.

Now in our culture it's probably a little bit difficult and probably not too common that one would judge someone based on appearance, because frankly, now we all kind of dress and look the same for the most part. But I will tell you this: There are several people that I have been talking with and sharing Christ with, out in the community, that have said they wanted to come to our church, but one of their first concerns was, "Will my kids' clothes be acceptable? Do they have the kind of clothes that will be accepted in this church or will we stand out as being very poor and not fit in?" It still is a concern of people today. And part of that concern may be where our church is located. You know you drive out here and we're surrounded by very expensive, nice homes. And maybe the assumption is that everybody here is wealthy and dressed to the "T's". But the reality is we're a very complete cross-section of this community; all kinds of folks are here. But we are not to judge one another on appearance or on those kinds of things that the world uses as a standard to size up people, put them in categories, and determine whether they have value or significance, play up to those who, by the world's standards, have more value, and look down and judge those who have less. We are not to do that.

Now there could be a lot of other ways that we might assess somebody. We might look at people who have tattoos or piercings. We might look at the older folks and say, "You know, they just don't have any value," or the older folks might look at young people and say, "Well, they don't have as much value." There are all kinds of ways that we can get into this judgmental thing and

take our cues from the culture rather than be the people of God with a sense of equal concern and compassion for all.

Having as part of our mission, a holistic ministry to each other—not just feeding people's spiritual truth, but caring for them body, mind, and spirit, that the physical needs within the church are met as well as the emotional needs, and the spiritual needs, that God is a person and God is a God who cares about the whole person—not just part of us. And that, too often, has crept into the evangelical church—that God cares about the soul, the spirit—the rest, you're on your own. That is not in keeping with truth, and God has called us to take care of one another because we are a family, and we need to be intimately involved with each other.

Verse 5:

> **Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?**

James is saying that the poor are part of the kingdom. God chose the poor, the people on the fringe, to be beneficiaries and full citizens in the kingdom, and we ought to have the same attitude: they are full, equal citizens, even the people on the fringe, the people that society looks down upon, the people that are rejected because of all of the external things, that in a world of competition and performance, make people feel unworthy. It's not to be so here.

There's a sense in which we as Christians should most identify with people on the fringe—the poor, the needy, the bankrupt, the prisoner—because we had to come to a place of absolute understanding of our spiritual bankruptcy even to receive God's generous offer of being a part of His kingdom. We had nothing to bring—no performance that we could offer that would ever measure up to God's holiness. We came bankrupt to God, and we cried out for mercy and received the free gift of God's salvation. So we, of all people, ought to understand what it's like to be destitute and poor and homeless and cut off from that which we most want. Of all the people in our world that we as Christians ought to most identify with, is people on the fringe.

Interestingly enough, when Jesus walked on this earth, where did you find Him? Going to the fringe...He went to the outcast; He went to the prostitute; He went to the sinner; He went to the lame and the leper. All of the people that the society and culture most rejected were the first people that Jesus sought after and went to. In fact, again and again in the Gospels He says, "*These are the hungry, the lonely, the destitute, the prostitute, the sinner—these are the people that I came to die for. These are the needy. These are the people whom I love and I'm calling to be a part of this kingdom.*" He says that these are the very people that God has called; therefore, we ought to be as concerned about them as God is concerned about them. His concern should be our concern, not just our own personal interest.

Verse 6:

> **But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?** (vs. 6-7)

In the day in which James lived in the first century, there was a very small percentage of people who were the powerful and the elite, and they did everything they could to oppress people, in order to maintain their position, and to use people. And there were some in the church who were courting those people. These are the very people who blasphemed the name of Jesus out in the marketplace every day. But they were playing up to them and giving them the special seats and honor, just because of their social standing in the world.

Verse 8:

> **If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well.**

We should not look down upon the poor who are part of the Kingdom. We should not look with favor on the rich and the powerful, the ones who may blaspheme your name. But we are to operate under the law to love our neighbor as ourselves. That's what God has called us to do, and Jesus defined our neighbor as any person, who is in our sphere, that has a need. Anyone who has a need—that's the person we're to love, and we are to love them in a holistic way. Not only would we do well to do that, but it is sin to not love your neighbor as yourself.

Verse 9:

> **But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.** (vs. 9-11)

What he's saying here is you can't pick and choose what part of God's law you're going to follow. You can't select and say, "*Well you know, I'm going to obey God in these areas, but these aren't as important and I'm not going to obey God over here. I don't murder, so I guess my adultery is okay."* We would understand that is absolutely false; that if you are guilty of disobeying God, you're guilty of disobeying God. But he's saying this is sin, and the churches that he was writing to were downplaying that. They were saying, *"That's not that big of a deal."* But it's a big deal to God, and it should be a big deal to us too today.

How we treat one another, how we view one another, whether we have condescension or favoritism towards people, based on some worldly standard, is sin, and we need to confess it and get it out of our life because it hinders the Kingdom of God and the work of God.

Verse 12:

> **So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.**

We're not only to say that we love people, but we're to act according to the law of love. We're to speak and to act according to the law of love. Our actions and our words are to measure up. We can't say we love people and then act in a way that's not caring.

Verse 13:

> **For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.**

There's a little play here on words in verse 13. He's saying when you have been judging the poor person, you also will stand and give an account before God. If you don't show mercy to the poor within the body of Christ, then how do you expect to receive mercy from God? But as people who have received mercy, and that mercy from God has triumphed over judgment, we don't stand under God's judgment. What we experience is mercy. Mercy has triumphed over judgment in our life. Then our mercy ought to triumph over judgment or condescension as we interact with other people. We're to be people of mercy, not judgment. We're not to stand and be critical or to laugh or mock anyone within the body of Christ, or any person for that matter. But we are to be people who are guided by love. The love of Christ should compel us to act and be involved in other people's lives in a way that meets real needs—spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Verse 14:

> **What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?**

What he's saying is authentic faith changes the way we live and treat one another. And so if there is no evidence of a changed life, of a different way of loving people, then we really have to question whether or not there's authentic faith. When someone really is a person who understands the mercy of God and receives God's forgiveness, the Spirit of God comes to live within us, and then part of the work of the Spirit is to make us into people who love others and begin to act like Jesus. So what value is the faith that doesn't produce a new kind of living and acting towards one another?

Verse 15:

> **If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?** (vs. 15-16)

I think that could very easily become a problem for us who have a very strong and right emphasis on truth and helping people understand truth and know truth. It's very easy for us to share spiritual truth with one another, to challenge each other with the Scriptures and to help people understand and know Biblical truth. But if that is not coupled with a care for the physical and emotional needs of people around us, then it is not holistic. It is not what God designed. It is not authentic. It's only partial, and we're missing God's heart about the matter, that the *whole* person is to be cared for—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

That is to be what happens within the church. We're to actively be involved in seeking to meet each other's needs. Now I could tell you there are many, many very exciting and encouraging things that I have seen in that regard, and have witnessed over the last number of years. I see a lot of people who really care about the people in their circle: that share of their resources and their time, that make meals, that provide rides, that pray, that go to the hospital, that visit the elderly, that really get involved. And yet I know that in a church of this size there are still many people that are disconnected and lonely and have very real needs. They need someone to come along and be a true

friend and provide for those needs. How difficult it must be to come into church on Sunday mornings, for some folks probably have been praying all week, "*God, you know how desperately we are in need,*" crying out to God to send someone or somehow to help them pay the electric bill or make that car payment, or even have a car to drive or have a ride somewhere, and thinking, "*You know, maybe today at church somebody will just be moved by God to come up and meet that need and offer assistance,"* and then to come and to go and nothing is said. Nothing is said! They hear all the great words and worship and then you hearken right back to Isaiah 58. Everybody's worshiping—busy, busy, busy with worship—and yet neglecting people's real needs. In the community of faith it should not be so!

What should be true of us is what was said of the early church back in Acts when they rallied to meet each other's needs—the orphaned, the widowed, the homeless. They were cared for; their needs were met. People were generous in every way and it's said there was not a needy person among them. Wouldn't that be a great goal for us to have as a church? There was not a needy person among them. And what a testimony that would be to the world around us to say, "*Wow, look at how those people love one another and how they care for each other!"*

Now we have some amazing things here that help to care for folks, and the generosity, for instance, to our benevolent fund. People gave over $80,000 last year towards the benevolent fund, and we were able to help hundreds of families and individuals with specific needs they had. But I want you to know that it's also a huge challenge for people to come to the church and say, "*I need help*." That's a very difficult thing. How much better is it that you and I, as we're interacting with people, and as we become aware of their needs, that we take the initiative on their behalf to invite the church to be involved in meeting their need and wherever possible, to meet the need yourself. You don't need to run it through the church to meet a need. Get involved in people's lives! Be willing to plug into their needs and to help them take the next steps to figure out what it is that they need in order to grow and develop.

I think God wants to help us step up to the plate even more in doing that. I'm very excited that in the next couple of months we are going to have the opportunity to survey the entire congregation and ask you what your particular talents and abilities and availabilities are to help other folks, whether it's changing light bulbs or mowing lawns or doing some plumbing work or giving rides to people. We're going to survey the entire congregation and we are going to offer to folks who have needs, specific help in areas, whether it's an older person or a single parent or somebody out in the community, maybe a neighbor or friend of yours. We as the church could get involved in meeting very specific needs of people and taking care of each other in a much more significant way. So begin waiting and looking for that, and we're going to ask people to be more on the lookout for people who might have a need, so that we're looking out for one another. We're connecting to one another in a way that really makes a difference in ministering to the whole person.

But you know the way we care for each other is just a start. God said the same concern that we should have for one another should be carried out into the community. God's heart is that His Kingdom and His church would be ever expanding and growing to the very ends of the earth that people might know Him personally and they would experience life in this New Kingdom, a life that is being restored and rebuilt and redeemed by God. And so our responsibility doesn't just stop at the edge of the church property or within the Body of Christ. It extends out into our community, that every needy person becomes part of *our* responsibility—not the government's responsibility. We have the opportunity to touch people, to minister to people, and God, I think, is waking up His people to that reality. If we really want to make a difference in this world, if we really want people

to understand and to know who Jesus is, then in tangible ways, we begin to meet people's very real physical and emotional needs in order that we might introduce them to the God who has prompted us to love them in that way, that they might know the true redeemer, the true restorer, the true rebuilder.

God wants us to walk alongside the neediest of this world, not in a sense of judgment or condemnation, not looking down upon them, not thinking of them as less, but seeing them as valuable and worthy because they're created in the image of God and, like us, an invitation to be a part of His Kingdom is open to them. But how will they know unless you and I are actively engaged and involved in meeting their very real needs? It is the responsibility for all of us to open up our hearts, to open up our time, to open up our resources, to be fully engaged in ministering to others in a personal way.

Our Father, this is a big deal to You. I pray that it would be a big deal to us. Forgive us for our selfishness in consuming all that you have given us in Christ, on ourselves. Open our hearts and our minds to the neediest, the people on the fringe, the people looked down upon and despised by the world. Cause us to love them in a way that they might see Jesus in us and respond to Him. In Jesus' name. Amen.

*Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2009 – Mark Kremer. All rights reserved.