

# ARTICLE 22: THE POOR & OVERLOOKED

## Summary

God's people are called to love the last, the least, and the lost.

## Detail

God's prioritization of the poor and overlooked is a theme on display throughout the biblical story. In the Exodus, God's foundational act of salvation, he saves an enslaved people from the sins of their oppressors. In the Law, he repeatedly calls his people to pay significant attention—both personally and politically—to what theologians have called the “Quartet of the Vulnerable”: widows, orphans, sojourners, and the poor. In the Prophets, he gives warning and rebuke to those who have oppressed the vulnerable or turned a blind eye to the plight of those in need. In the Wisdom literature, he gives insight regarding the complicated nature of both wealth and poverty. In the Epistles, he repeatedly calls his Church to care for the last, the least, and the lost.

In his infinite wisdom the triune God decided that Jesus would take on flesh into a community that was a religious and ethnic minority, into citizenship in a low-influence city, and conceived by unplanned pregnancy into a powerless, sojourning, low-income family. For this reason, among others, Jesus equates kindness to the poor and overlooked with kindness to him.

In the Gospels, to be in proximity to Jesus was to be in proximity to the poor and powerless. In his public ministry, he heals the sick, cares for the poor, feeds the hungry, and ministers to the suffering. Jesus regularly shares meals and spends time with those considered outcasts. Rather than clamor for fame or influence with those in the seats of power, the Savior is content in the company of fisherman and tax-collectors, servants and widows. Jesus does not overlook the people whom society overlooks. There are no God-forsaken people or places.

Jesus' coming kingdom will bring about the ultimate restoration of creation from every dimension of sin's curse: spiritual and psychological, bodily and ecological, economic and socio-political. As the Church, we are called to embody Christ's kingdom today: through concrete acts of compassion, tangible ministries of mercy, and prophetic witnesses of justice. These serve as a sign and foretaste of the kingdom that, upon King Jesus' return, he will bring in fullness.

## Questions for Reflection:

1. Why do you think human society tends to prioritize the wealthy and disregard the poor?
2. What difficulty or benefit might moving toward the Quartet of the Vulnerable bring to the church?

## Scripture:

- Matthew 25:40 / the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'
- Leviticus 23:22 / And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.
- Proverbs 14:31 / Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.
- Galatians 2:10 / Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.
- Zechariah 7:9-10 / Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.
- Luke 14:13 / But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.