

Session V- Housing for People with Disabilities

Bible Verses of Focus: Luke 14:12-14

Resources Needed:

- Copies of the next lesson's notes either printed or sent out in advance by email to each participant.
- Bibles, pencils, paper

Part One - The Situation

Two weeks before his graduation from high school my son walked out of school never to return. Two weeks! — that is all he had to do to graduate! But he couldn't take it anymore. His mental illness had gotten so bad that he just gave up.

After a hospitalization and several more months of psychiatric treatment he tried again to be a part of this world. Through vocational rehabilitation he got a part-time job; part-time was all he could manage. And he managed that for only a couple of months until he had to give that up also. Over the next months the psychiatrist went through every medication possible, but nothing could be found that would work. He mostly lay on his bed trying to manage his anxiety to generate enough motivation to arouse himself out of debilitating depression, and to get control of his scathing rage.

Of course, he lived at home with my wife and myself. Our relationships deteriorated, not only mom and dad with their son, but also between mom and dad. His anger that he could not control was regularly taken out on us. Discipline often backfired. Supportive loving interactions only went so far. He contemplated suicide. He secretly brought a gun into the house. At its worst I would come home from work and in trepidation open the door to our house afraid I would find someone dead — my son or my wife.

Finally, my wife, Carol, and I agreed that our son had to live elsewhere. We did not have the financial resources to fund an apartment for him, but we agreed that even if it drove us into bankruptcy, he had to go. Our son even agreed to leave unable to tolerate any longer the "hate" he said he felt for us. (Helpless people often feel intense anger for those upon whom they are forced to depend for their lives.)

After researching possibilities, we found assistance with Hillcrest Family Services. (They no longer provide services in Iowa City.) But years ago they had at least 2 group homes here. They not only provided housing for our son, but also got him enrolled in available social services and rehabilitation programs. Finally, he was not only being housed, but his disability was being treated, and Carol and I were receiving needed support. We felt relieved, blessed, and as if God had finally heard our prayers.

I tell you all of this not to arouse sympathy for our family, not to warn you or society that you need to provide services for those in desperate need or else, not even to play upon your Christian conscience so that you will give aide to those who are in dire need. I tell you this as a way of

saying “thank you” to you and to the social structures of which you are a part for saving my family.

There are others of you who are here today who might also have a story about housing needs providing a saving hand for your family or for someone with whom you are close. Or maybe you have a question or comment about housing for the disabled that we could hear and discuss. If so, please speak out now.

Part Two- Developing Christian Motivation to Help

Read the text: Luke 14:12-14 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

12 He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Comments or questions about the text.

+ Pehr and Theresa (my nephew and spouse) gave a dinner for friends who had graduated from college and had not yet found a job. The hope was that at the dinner they could make connections that might lead to employment.

+ How does this text speak to our concern for housing for the disabled? Most of the disabled cannot return payment.

+ If one cannot expect to receive reward for helping others, then why give help?

a. To get into heaven - suggested by text - but this is reward.

(William Barclay)

‘He dropped a penny in the plate

‘And merely raised his eyes

‘Glad the week’s rent was duly paid

‘For mansions in the skies.’

b. Because Jesus said so. Obedience to external prompting. Is blind obedience sufficient?

c. Pursuit of an inspiring dream: “the kingdom of God come on Earth as it is in heaven.”

The story of the call of Sir Wilfred Grenfell as a medical missionary to Labrador.

d. Love of others awakened by Christ.

-The introduction to Luke in the Good News Bible reads: “Luke records that Jesus was called by the Spirit of the Lord to ‘preach Good News to the poor,’ and this gospel is filled with a concern for people with all kinds of needs.”

e. In response to God’s salvation.

Three understandings of the way the cross saves us

-Ireanaeus - Death defeated.

-Aquinas: Jesus died in our place

-Moral theory - Jesus revealed the undefeatable love of God - Jesus will love us with God's love even if we should kill him. Out of appreciation for loved received, we love God in return and want to do God's will.

Part Three - How to Help the Disabled with the Need for Housing

A. Facts about Disability (Information below taken from website "Disability Benefits, Facts and Resources for Persons with Disabilities")

- Disability is broadly defined as the consequence of an impairment that a may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, developmental, or some combination of these.
- A disability may be present from birth or occur at some time during life.
- In countries with life expectancies over 70 years, individuals spend on average about 8 years living with disabilities. (In other words, disability affects most of us at some time during life.)
- Around 10 % of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with a disability at any given time.
- The disabled are the world's largest minority.
- Often people with disabilities are rejected, ignored, hidden from mainline society, and abused.
- On December 13, 2006, the United Nations formally agreed on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- There followed in 2011 a convention requiring participating countries to adopt national laws or modify existing laws so that persons with disabilities will:
 - Have equal rights to education,
 - Employment, and
 - Cultural Life
 - The right to own and inherit property
 - To not be discriminated against in marriage, etc.
 - To not be unwilling subjects in medical experiments

B. What we are doing through governmental assistance:

- Belief that people with disabilities should live, work, play, learn together with us because it makes all of us a richer, better, and more complete people, and motivates us to find ways to include them in our society.
- Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agencies provide \$40 million a year to public housing authorities across the country to fund about 5,300 Housing Choice Vouchers for non-elderly persons with disabilities that will allow them to live independently.
- One (of two) programs that put those funds into use is Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8 Housing)
 - The Section 8 Housing Program issues cash vouchers that individuals can use to help pay rent to wherever they can find vacancies.

- The voucher amounts are determined by establishing 30% of the individual or family income to be applied toward rent, and the voucher pays the remaining. - This plan is very flexible and can be used almost anywhere.
- There has been resistance from some landlords who refuse to accept people using vouchers (that practice is now illegal in Iowa City but not Coralville).
- Demand far outstrips the need so that individuals may have to be on a waiting list for as long as 2 years before being served.

- The other governmental program is to provide site-specific vouchers specific for persons who have disabilities to live in HUD housing units.
 - Waiting lists for available housing units can be up to 2 years.

In addition to HUD housing and Section 8 vouchers are a number of group homes provided for people that might have specific needs. Such group homes in our area are places like Chatham Oaks, Systems Unlimited, ARC, and Ecumenical Towers which provide living for individuals who are mentally ill, developmentally disabled, brain injured, and or elderly. (More to come here from Darrell Flynn.)

In addition to homes there are services of all kinds that are offered to persons needing assistance in order to stay in their homes. A look at the yellow pages and the Internet will provide you with many options. Most of these services are businesses for profit, but are very caring enterprises. Also, much of government housing is provided by businesses that are funded by the government. For example, Autumn Park on Muscatine is owned by a private corporation centered in Sioux City, and receives funds from the government to carry out their mission.

C. What are we doing through the church:

In addition to the services and places offered by the government, there are agencies, programs, and places sponsored by the church which serve the disabled. The list below is not exhaustive, but only serves as examples.

- Ecumenical Towers is a HUD program which this church should know very well since a major actor in the creation of Ecumenical Towers was Bob Welsh. This project which serves the low income elderly and a few disabled is the child of an ecumenical group of churches in Iowa City
- Homes of Hope in Indianapolis. The church I served in Indianapolis (Faith UCC) under the supervision of Homes of Hope built a home for a low income family. Homes of hope works just like Habitat for Humanity, except the Jewish community of Indianapolis is included. The Director of Homes of Hope was Dick Hudson, brother of Dave Hudson of First Christian Church of Iowa City.
- Faith Church of Indianapolis also built a house for the Emmaus Homes of St Charles, MO., a suburb of St. Louis. Faith church built a parsonage for itself it decided it should build a house for Emmaus.
- Some hold the view that the church should be the benevolent hand of our society. They say it is the job of the church to take care of the poor. It is my view that the church is supposed to be the yeast of society, giving example and motivation for taking care of the poor. The projects of the church are the action of the yeast. They are to stimulate the same kind of activity within society that will enhance the coming of the Kingdom of God.

D. Ongoing Need

- Priced out. (On the Internet see ‘Affordable Housing for People with Disabilities — A Worsening Crises’ by Melville Charitable Trust)
 - Over the last decade, increased rental demand combined with development primarily at the high end of the market has led to record low vacancy rates, higher rents, and increased competition for affordable and subsidized housing. This overall market trend is reflected in the ever-worsening affordability gap for extremely low-income renters with disabilities.
 - Supplemental Security Income is the federal income maintenance program that assist people with significant long-term disabilities who have virtually no assets and — in most cases — no other source of income. The national average rent for a studio/efficiency unit in 2016 was \$752, equal to 99% of a monthly SSI payment. In thirteen states and in the District of Columbia, areas with the highest housing costs in the nation, the average studio’ efficiency rent exceeded 100% of the income of an SSI recipient.
 - The National Low Income Housing Coalition documents in its 2017 “Out of Reach” report said it would require more than two full time jobs at the federal minimum wage to pay for a one-bedroom apartment at fair market rent.

- Given the need and the shrinkage of federal and state dollars going into housing support for people with disabilities, what more can we do to meet the need?

- Is this problem the responsibility of the government or of private enterprise, (including the church)?
 - In 1931 Herbert Hoover urged Americans to embrace the principles of local responsibility and mutual self-help. If we depart from those principles, said the President, we “*have struck at the roots of self-government.*” (FDR by Jean Edward Smith).
 - Let it be also noted that Hoover would do anything himself and would allow the government to assist private enterprise to help society give help to the needy, but he did not believe the government should be involved.
 - In contrast, Franklin D. Roosevelt said:
“In broad terms I assert modern society, acting through its government, owes the definite obligation to prevent the starvation or dire want of any of its fellow men and women who try to maintain themselves but cannot. ... To these unfortunate citizens aid must be extended by government — not as a matter of charity but as a matter of social duty.” (ibid p.250).

 - Roosevelt also quoted the constitution as saying that the Federal Government was established among other things ‘*to promote the general welfare,*’
 - Which position do you support, and is either way more Christian than the other?

Closing

Reread Luke 14:12-14

Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
where there is hatred, let me sow love,
where there is injury, pardon,
where there is doubt, faith,
where there is despair, hope,
where there is darkness, light,
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Masterful

grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to sternal life.