

HOW POOR WAS JESUS?

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I started looking last week at whether poverty is more righteous than wealth.

Some people believe it's almost sinful to prosper. Jesus said "Blessed are the poor" and told the rich young ruler to "go, sell all you possess".

They almost believe poverty is next to Godliness. 😊

However ... money itself is neutral. It's more a matter of what's in someone's heart.

Last week we saw a number of scriptures showing God's desire to prosper and bless.

Psalm 112 told us that wealth and riches are in the house of the man of God — who can be generous and distribute to other people.

God promised to prosper ancient Israel if they would walk His way — Deuteronomy 28.

Abraham was very rich in silver and gold. Isaac was "exceedingly prosperous". Job was the wealthiest man in the East. King David gave approximately \$20 billion towards the temple construction.

Overall ... God seems happy to prosper — and many great men of God have prospered.

Yet many believers remain uncomfortable about wealth. They can see many rich people in the world who are evil and greedy ... who became rich by selfishness ... crime ... exploiting others. Wealth looks evil.

Others are still not convinced about what the Bible teaches. They've heard traditional teaching about being "poor and humble".

One area we'll look at today — Jesus is our example. Was He poor?

Over Xmas I came across a number of articles reminding us all that Jesus was born poor ... in a stable. He was effectively homeless. And ... implied that He stayed that way.

True or not?

Luke 2:4-7

4 **Joseph also went up from Galilee**, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, **to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem**, because he was of the house and lineage of David,

5 **to be registered with Mary**, his betrothed wife, who was with child.

6 So it was, that **while they were there**, the days were completed for her to be delivered. *(They didn't arrive at midnight in a snowstorm looking for somewhere to stay. They would have been there for a period of time before the birth of Jesus)*

7 And **she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.** *(“No room for them in the inn” = No space for them in the guest room)*

We looked at this recently. Not a homeless family with Jesus' birth in a barn. They were there amongst their relatives ... ready for the birth.

But often used to lay the foundation of a story about how poor Jesus and His family were.

Luke 2:21-24

21 **And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus**, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

22 **Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord**

23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”),

24 **and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”**

Leviticus 12:6-8

6 **When the days of her purification are fulfilled**, whether for a son or a daughter, **she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt**

offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

7 **Then he shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement for her.** And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female.

8 And **if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons**—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.’ ”

These verses show that ideally a lamb should be brought ... and one pigeon or turtle dove. Or — if you are poor and can't afford a lamb — you can bring two pigeons or turtle doves.

So — the conclusion that people reach is that Mary and Joseph must be poor. It was possible — at this time — but too sketchy. Lots of newly married couples have struggled early on!!

But ... even if so ... it didn't stay that way.

Matthew 2:1-2

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, **wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,**

2 saying, **“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”**

The wise men came after Jesus was born. Notice: Not just 3?

Matthew 2:9-11

9 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over **where the young Child was.**

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

11 And **when they had come into the house, (not a barn or stable) they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him.**

(They bowed down to the prophesied King) **And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.**

The wise men presented treasures — TO A GREAT KING.

Gold would have been the least valuable?

The value of these treasures is not stated in the Bible. But some Bible scholars estimate from \$3 million up to a maximum of \$120 million.

So the family wasn't poor any longer!

There seems to be evidence that Joseph then set up a construction company — hence Jesus being known as a carpenter (stonemason or craftsman).

It certainly seems reasonable that Jesus and His siblings (at least 6 of them) ... had a reasonably comfortable lifestyle?

Then people go to:

2 Corinthians 8:9

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

Jesus became poor?

Philippians 2 tells us Jesus “emptied Himself” of His eternal glory to become a man. Jesus’ lifestyle on earth bore no comparison to heaven.

This is a statement of Jesus’ commitment to giving Himself for others. He didn’t insist on holding tight to His eternal glory.

If this verse means Jesus became economically very poor — it also implies brethren become economically rich?

Yet:

2 Corinthians 8:1-4

1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia:

2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.

3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,

4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

The Macedonians were experiencing deep poverty (the effect of Roman rule) — though they were generous of heart.

The Macedonians were generous. Jesus was generous. Paul was encouraging the Corinthians in chapters 8 and 9 to be generous to the needy believers — NOT THE MINISTRY!!

Lots of people consider Jesus to have been almost dirt-poor. An itinerant preacher. Unkempt. Bedraggled. Ambling along looking pious ... with long straggly hair.

Luke 9:57-58

57 Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, **“Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.”**

58 And Jesus said to him, **“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”**

“Nowhere to lay His head”? So — like homeless people? Sleeping in a cardboard box — or under a hedge? 😊

The context here is Jesus pointing out the true cost of being a disciple. There’s not much rest! And a lot of travelling! It’s not for everyone!

Birds and foxes can take a break ... relax in their dens and nests. Jesus is always on duty — even when he is “at home”.

See the context further in verses 59-62.

Luke 9:59-62

59 Then He said to another, “Follow Me.”

But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

60 Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.”

61 And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.”

62 But Jesus said to him, **“No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”**

So Jesus isn't revealing He is too poor to even afford a bed! He is telling him to count the cost.

Matthew 4:12-13

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.

13 And leaving Nazareth, **He came and dwelt in Capernaum**, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,

Jesus dwelt in Capernaum. It was a seaside town. It was the home of Peter ... Andrew ... James ... John and Matthew.

To dwell in Greek implies to settle down ... to reside ... to house permanently.

Jesus chose to live there. He had a home — either His own ... or rented. Not a cardboard box on some highway!

Matthew 4:13(NET)

13 While in Galilee, **he moved from Nazareth to make his home in Capernaum by the sea**,

Jesus was not a homeless vagrant. He lived in a house. He would have had neighbours. He would have been sociable.

In view of Jesus' fame ... it would likely need to be quite sizeable?

He's got to cater for 12 Apostles ... lots of other disciples ... many visitors. A studio apartment won't do!!

Mark 2:1

1 And again He entered Capernaum after some days, **and it was heard that He was in the house**.

Mark 2:1 (NET)

1 Now after some days, when he returned to Capernaum, **the news spread that he was at home**.

Mark 2:1 (NIV)

1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, **the people heard that he had come home.**

Mark 2:2

2 **Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door.** And He preached the word to them.

Many gathered together.

Mark 2:3-12

3 **Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men.**

4 **And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd,** they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

6 And **some of the scribes were sitting there** and reasoning in their hearts,
7 “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

8 But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?”

9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’?

10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” —He said to the paralytic,

11 “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”

12 Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that **all** were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

Sounds like a big group — including Scribes and Pharisees.

Potentially a large house ... with multiple rooms including a second storey ... a courtyard ... gardens — possibly even a fountain (some archeological digs suggest this was not uncommon).

So ... much of the time ... Jesus did have somewhere to lay His head.

Of course ... Jesus and His disciples often went on tour — and so stayed away from His home.

But for a famous Rabbi — hospitality and support would always be available.

Luke 8:1-3

1 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him,

2 and **certain women** who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—

Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,

3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others **who provided for Him from their substance.**

Many provided for Jesus and the disciples.

Luke 8:3 (TPT)

3 Many other women who supported Jesus' ministry from their own personal finances also traveled with him.

Probably not just these specific women? There would be others too who wanted to help.

Also ... **there was sufficient income to require a treasurer to manage the finances.**

John 13:21-30

21 When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

22 Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke.

25 Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"

26 Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

28 But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him.
29 For some thought, because **Judas had the money box**, that Jesus had said to him, “Buy those things we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. (*Judas had the money box [bag or casket]*)
30 Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

There was enough income to cater for 12 Apostles and the Feast and/or surplus to give to the poor.

Jesus was well able to meet the needs of His team and care for the poor.

John 12:1-8

1 Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

2 There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.

3 **Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair.** And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. (*Very costly — \$50,000?*)

4 **But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot**, Simon’s son, **who would betray Him**, said,

5 **“Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”**

6 **This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.**

7 But Jesus said, “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial.

8 For **the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.**”

A few things to note:

- Jesus was happy to accept an expensive gift.
- Jesus wasn’t resisting wealth.
- Mary was wealthy.
- Judas was the unhappy one!

There was enough income to support Jesus’ ministry — and give to the poor — even after a thief had stolen some.

Note also verse 8: The poor you'll always have ... BUT NOT ME. Jesus differentiates Himself from "the poor".

Matthew 11:16-19

16 "But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions,

17 and saying:

'We played the flute for you,

And you did not dance;

We mourned to you,

And you did not lament.'

18 For **John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'**

19 **The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'** But wisdom is justified by her children."

Jesus was accused of being a glutton and a winebibber. A FALSE accusation! They believed that in part because Jesus was often seen at banquets and feasts ... enjoying people's hospitality.

Jesus wasn't a dumpster-diver — living on scraps of foods ... close to starvation. He was popular with the people. He was good company.

Of course He had a difficult mission. He would die by the age of 33. He didn't have a normal life.

Jesus was not an example of a scruffy vagrant living close to abject poverty.

Even His clothes were quality.

John 19:17-18

17 **And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha,**

18 **where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.**

John 19:23-24

23 **Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece.**

24 They said therefore among themselves, "**Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,**" that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: "**They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.**"

Jesus had a top quality tunic — seamless (as worn by the High Priest).

Lots of politicians and churches today like to use Jesus as an example of poverty and homelessness. It supports their agenda of social justice ... re-defining Christianity as being all about the socially deprived and vulnerable.

We don't tend to hear much about sayings such as "unless ye repent ye shall all likewise perish"!

CONCLUSION: I don't believe the scriptures show Jesus as a poor ... homeless vagrant.

It seems to me like He was comfortably off.

Not an example of poverty for us to follow!

His lifestyle is consistent with the Old Testament scriptures showing that God's preference is to bless His people with prosperity.