



## CELL GUIDE

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TOPIC	Blessing with Justice and Mercy	SPEAKER	Elder Lok Vi Ming
THEME	Critical Concerns Beyond the Souls of Man	DATE	17 & 18 Aug 2024

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# MESSAGE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

Elder Lok opened the sermon with an overview of Bethesda Care Services (BCS) – started in 1996, the community service arm has evolved into a multi-faceted organisation that focuses on youths, elderly, welfare services for the needy and more. The message focuses on living a life that reflects God's heart through justice, mercy, and humility. The essence of true faith is not found in grand gestures but in how we treat the most vulnerable among us.

## THE LORD HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS HEART FOR THE POOR

In James 1:27, the bible tells us that pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is when we keep ourselves unspotted by the world and care for the vulnerable groups amongst us. We are reminded that we should not lord over others even when we are in positions of authority and that when we care for the needy and the poor, we are doing it unto the Lord (Matthew 25:31-40).

The Lord has a special compassion for the marginalised in our society and in order to turn ourselves from evil, we are told to do good, seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless and plead for the widow (Isaiah 1:4, 16-17).

Leviticus 5:11-12 tells us that the Lord looks at the posture of our hearts instead of the material things we can bring to him.

### What does the Lord require of you?

In Micah 6:8, we are called to **act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly** with God.

- 1) **Walking humbly** with the Lord involves two things – our Posture and Perspective.
  - a. Using the analogy of 2 mountain goats on a narrow path, where one goat must kneel to allow the other to pass, Elder Lok reminds us that a humble posture is looking beyond the person or disagreement to see the cross of Jesus. It involves us taking a step back and submitting to others.
  - b. Our perspective matters: true humility is difficult but essential for living a life that reflects God. The challenge of true humility is not thinking of ourselves more highly than we should.

- 2) **Act justly and love mercy:** the idea of biblical justice is that it seeks the restoration of right relationships within society, in accordance with God's attributes of righteousness and equity. Through Leviticus 6:1-7, it shows us what Christianity should be all about. Through Christ, we have been forgiven of our sins and restored back into right fellowship and standing with God and this is the essence of BCS where they restore what was taken away from the less fortunate and return things to the way they were, as if the wrong has never been done to the person.

### **Empowerment is core to Christian discipleship and to Christian service**

The sermon also shares stories of young individuals who, through the support of BCS, discovered their talents and passions. Empowerment is seen as central to the Christian faith, with Ephesians 3:20 reminding believers that God can do exceedingly abundant above all that we ask or think, through his power that works within us.

**Biblical Justice is not only for restoration but is also dignifying** because it prohibits exploitation of the poor (Deuteronomy 24:14-15) or taking away their means of livelihood (Deuteronomy 24:6). Instead, it enables new beginnings and believers are encouraged to support the needy in ways that empower them to sustain themselves (Deuteronomy 15:13-14, 24:19-22). As illustrated by the Gleaning Laws in the Old Testament, landowners were instructed to leave the edges of their fields unharvested so the poor could gather food. This law provided a way for the poor to maintain their dignity by working for their sustenance.

Showing mercy in practical applications is illustrated in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37, where it redefines the concept of a "neighbour"; and challenges believers to extend mercy beyond their comfort zones – we should enlarge the definition of a neighbour and be a good Samaritan to as many people as we can. As believers, we should aim to do good and exercise charity as a matter of lifestyle. However, we are also reminded of the dangers of hypocrisy (Proverbs 13:7) and the deception and loss of a counterfeit faith that is lacking in generosity, kindness and grace.

The sermon draws on Spurgeon's interpretation of Proverbs 11:25, which emphasises the interconnectedness of creation and the reciprocity of generosity. When we water others, we ourselves are refreshed, illustrating the spiritual truth that giving leads to receiving.

## **CONCLUSION**

Are we living in a way where we walk humbly and live a life that truly reflects God's heart for justice and mercy? The sermon calls on believers to examine their lives and to make a conscious effort to live a life that truly reflects justice, mercy, and humility. We are also reminded that serving others is not just a duty but a privilege that brings joy and fulfilment. How can we show true justice and kindness by restoring, dignifying people's lives, and blessing them?

# QUESTIONS

1. Share an experience where through the process of blessing others who were in a particularly needy or vulnerable position, you have been blessed. How has that helped you experience God's heart for charity and social justice?

2. In what areas of our lives do we struggle with humility, and how can we work to cultivate a humble posture?

3. The sermon discusses the parable of the Good Samaritan. How does this parable challenge your understanding of who your "neighbour" is and how can we cultivate a lifestyle of being a good Samaritan in our community?