

## SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES ON ALMSGIVING

Matthew 5:42; 6:1-4, 19-21

Luke 12:14-34; 16:19-31

Acts 10:2, 35

2 Corinthians 8:9

## FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

- ✧ Why does Jesus tell us to give alms in secret? How does a public display of almsgiving breed hypocrisy?
- ✧ A person gives to a charity for the sole purpose of obtaining a tax deduction. Is this almsgiving? Why or why not? How does almsgiving differ in principle from donating to a charitable cause?
- ✧ Scripture teaches us that when we give alms to the poor and needy, we are acknowledging God's presence in them. Why?
- ✧ How might you reach out to the needy and poor in your community? How could others benefit by your offering of time, talent, and treasure?

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Scripture challenges us to *stewardship*, to use our time, our talents, and our treasures to glorify God through service to others. An essential aspect of stewardship is *almsgiving*, the sharing of all we are and possess with others, especially those in need:

*The poor will never cease to exist, for which cause I command you to open wide your hand to others, to the needy and to the poor (Deut 15:11).*

Jesus is the supreme model of almsgiving. His ministry, by His own admission, was to the poor and the needy:

*Though He was rich, for your sake He became poor so that, by His poverty, you might become rich (2 Cor 8:9).*

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# ALMSGIVING



## LOVE AND COMPASSION

Jesus reached out to others willingly and freely. He shared and offered His very person out of no other consideration than His love and compassion and concern. This forms the very heart of the Good News which Jesus proclaimed. Saint Paul teaches that we must do likewise:

*Glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the Gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others (Cor 9:13, 14).*

The early Christian community was an example of generosity and mutual concern. The *Acts of the Apostles* relates how the early Christians shared all they had, especially with the poor and needy. No fanfare was made; rather, almsgiving took place with simplicity, secrecy, and sincerity.

## MORE THAN “SOCIAL ACTION”

Today, as in the days of the early Church, almsgiving remains an imperative for us as God’s People. How critical it is for us to share ourselves with the poor, the needy, the lonely, and the homeless, especially as our society is faced with countless tragedies and examples of social injustice. While the temptation to reduce almsgiving to “philanthropy” or “social action” or to seek personal gratification and public adulation is especially great today, simplicity, secrecy, and sincerity distinguish almsgiving from social action:

*Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Mt 6:1-4).*

So important is our generosity towards others that it literally becomes a gauge of our acceptance of and participation in the generosity of Jesus Himself. Saint Paul reminded the Corinthians of the generosity of the faithful in Macedonia, who, of their own free will, gave beyond their means to those in need. Their actions, Saint Paul wrote, proved that their love for God and one another was genuine.

## THE CHEERFUL GIVER

Finally, alms must be given generously, thankfully, and cheerfully:

*He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good*

*work. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God; for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints, but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God (2 Cor 9:6-12).*

Almsgiving, then, is not something which may be practiced by some and not by others. Jesus did not say, “If you give alms,” but, rather, “When you give alms,” thereby implying that generosity is a visible expression of our love for God and for others.

We show our generosity and share God’s gifts when we

- ✧ offer, in silence and secrecy, money, clothing, food, or other goods to those in need;
- ✧ take the time to visit the lonely, support the distraught, house the homeless, or reach out in love to anyone in anyway; and
- ✧ use our talents for the betterment of others.

In every instance we must strive to accomplish these things without fanfare, expectations, or self-interest in mind, and without calling attention to our actions. Jesus promises, “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward shall be great in heaven.”