

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
Sunday, November 14, 2021
25th Sunday after Pentecost
Scripture: Matthew 25: 34-46

Sermon: Responding in Love

There was an elderly man walking the beach at dawn. He noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them back into the sea. Catching up with the youth, he asked the boy what he was doing. The young man said that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun. “But the beach goes on for miles and miles, and there are millions of starfish,” countered the man. “How can your effort make any difference?” The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and, throwing it into the safety of the waves, replied, “It makes a difference to this one!”

9 World Poverty Statistics that Everyone Should Know

January 28, 2020 | [Clean Water Poverty Cycle](#)

Efforts to alleviate world poverty in the last few decades have proven hugely successful. Today, just 10 percent of the world is living in extreme poverty, a huge improvement from 29 in 1995 and [a third of the percentage](#). But, **there is still much to be done.**

Below are the most up-to-date, quantifiable poverty statistics from the world’s top data gathering and humanitarian organizations. The information below compares high income to low income and rural to urban populations on topics such as child mortality, sanitation and hygiene, life-expectancy, malnutrition, and extreme poverty.

Behind every statistic is a real person facing challenges. In addition to economic strains, poverty affects feelings of worth and mutes the voices of the poor. These nine world poverty statistics can seem overwhelming, but real change is happening in some of the most remote parts of our world.

World Poverty Statistics: Global Poverty Report 2020

#1. Globally, 10 percent of the world is living on less than \$2 a day.

That’s just over 700 million people living on less than \$1.90 a day, the World Bank’s international line for extreme poverty.

A third of the entire urban population is [living in a slum](#), which are unsafe or unhealthy homes in a crowded city.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, [41 percent of the population](#) is living at less than \$1.90. Those experiencing poverty to this extent can often feel a lack of control over their own outcomes and circumstances. However, in the year 1996, 59 percent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa was living in extreme poverty. Although the region is still facing conflict, natural disasters, and more, they are steadily progressing.

#2. For every 1,000 children born, 39 will die before they turn five years old.

Although tragic, this is [remarkable progress](#) when compared to UNICEF's 1990 report of 93 deaths per 1,000 births.

The 2017 UNICEF Child Mortality report claims, "1 child in 36 dies in the first month" in poorer areas like Sub-Saharan Africa, "while in the world's high-income countries the ratio is 1 in 333."

Most under-five deaths are caused by preventable diseases like the following:

- malaria
- diarrhea
- pneumonia.

The most common contributors to these diseases? ***Malnutrition, contaminated water, and poor sanitation and hygiene.***

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 1 in 3 children will experience stunted growth because they are not getting enough food, or not getting the vitamins they need in their food. Stunted growth also affects cognitive ability, making it more difficult for children to excel in class. Up to 50 percent of all cases of stunted growth are caused by [inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene](#).

#3. Globally in 2016, over 63 million children ages 6-11 years old were not attending school.

That's tens of millions of young children in the world who miss out on their education. In total for children under the age of 17 years, the number increases to 263 million ([1 in 5 children](#)).

According to the [World Bank](#), Africa has experienced rapid increases in school enrollments, with total net enrollment of children in primary school expanding from just 55 percent in 1995 to 74 percent by 2012. Still, [literacy rates](#) are lowest among young women in South Asia and in West and Central Africa.

#4. Of all the children living in extreme poverty, 75 percent live in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

Children are disproportionately affected by poverty. According to [World Bank Data](#), half of the population living in extreme poverty are children. Of those children, three-quarters live in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

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#5. Today, approximately 8.9 percent of the world's total population is still practicing open defecation.

[Open defecation](#) means people are defecating outside, whether that be in a field or behind a home or a bush. When people defecate outside, human feces find their way into food and water sources, polluting and causing disease among people in those communities.

These illnesses are entirely preventable with access to a toilet to keep feces separate from communities.

#6. Rural populations around the world are seven times as likely as urban populations to be drinking contaminated water.

The [discrepancy among rural and urban populations](#) is striking, with rural populations experiencing extreme poverty at much higher rates than their urban neighbors.

Access to safe water is a major marker of socioeconomic classes globally. Families who are drinking contaminated water fall sick much more often. This causes the following:

- missed work
- absences from school
- more money spent on health clinic fees

The World Health Organization found that rural families are [three times as likely](#) to walk far distances for safe water. In developing countries, walking long distances for water almost always falls on the shoulders of young girls or women; the travelers are vulnerable to assaults on these daily journeys, and the time investment often results in girls missing school.

[Download the Free 2019 World Poverty Report here.](#)

#7. Less than half of rural populations (45 percent) have the knowledge and resources to manage their own health by washing their hands with soap and water.

[UNICEF](#) reports that the simple practice of washing your hands can reduce preventable (and in many cases, deadly) diseases by 40 percent. The behavior is the most effective and affordable hygiene practice that a community can undertake.

But, those experiencing extreme poverty often ~~water~~ struggle to effectively practice hand washing.

#8. People in the United States are expected to live 18 years longer, on average, than those born in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Life expectancy at birth is an important measure of the overall health of a country. It's influenced by the following and more:

- employment rates
- quality of education
- access to health care

While the average person in the United States lives to be 78, [the average person in Sub-Saharan Africa lives to be 60](#). But, while other countries climb higher, the United States has dropped in life expectancy from 78.84 years in 2014 to 78.53 years in 2017.

The divide in life expectancy is the greatest between Monaco, Europe and the Republic of Chad in Central Africa. While someone born in Monaco can expect to live to 89 years, someone born in Chad will, on average, see 54 years of life.

#9. About a third of the UN's Least Developed Countries are also the least churched countries in the world.

As a matter of correlation, 1 in every 3 countries listed by the UN as those with the least socioeconomic development are also those that have had [little Christian influence](#).

Poverty Alleviation in the Past

Overcoming global poverty is a complex endeavor that the world isn't finished with yet. Rural populations still disproportionately live with the hardships of extreme poverty, and thousands of children are lost each day due to preventable illnesses.

Poverty alleviation efforts in the past have been guilty of exacerbating the problem—providing aid when development and/or rehabilitation programs would be more apt a solution, and failing to listen to the needs of communities. This disempowers and invokes feelings of inability among the poor.

As governments and organizations everywhere begin to correct good-intentioned but damaging poverty alleviation efforts, global progress out of poverty will only continue to grow.

Water's Role in Global Poverty Alleviation

Clean water lays the foundation for poor communities everywhere. It frees people from waterborne illnesses that inhibit work, costs communities in health clinic fees, and prevents children from attending school. It is essential to stepping out of poverty. Clean water, however, is not maintainable without [water access, sanitation, and hygiene practices](#) (WASH) that keep water safe.

There are many incredible organizations working to end extreme poverty through the implementation of WASH programs and the construction of safe water points. At Lifewater International, our programs focus on sustainable community development.

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Lifewater exists to provide safe water and improved health in such a way that the strengths already present in a community are realized, and community members take ownership of their own futures.

Learn about how Lifewater is helping rural communities realize their own God-given potential through our [Vision of a Healthy Village](#) approach, and download last year's 2019 World Poverty Report to share with others.

[Download the Free 2019 World Poverty Report here.](#)

Lifewater International is a Christian non-profit clean water and community health organization committed to helping children and families living in extreme poverty thrive. Learn more about Lifewater's Vision of a Healthy Village program and the unique contributions local churches, governments, leaders, and families make to build a healthier and more productive future for their children at lifewater.org.

There are almost 8 billion people on this planet. Nearly two billion of them are living in poverty. Approximately 40.6 million are living in poverty in the USA. One billion are hungry. Some live in our neighborhood; others live in countries around the world. Earthquakes, tsunamis and tornadoes devastate neighborhoods and nations.

Life can feel a lot like that beach with the starfish, can't it?

You and I were made to respond in love and to make a difference where we can. We really want to make the world a better place.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well."

Jesus often hides in plain sight. Jesus is waiting for someone to notice. "anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me."

Jesus will someday recount, one by one, all the acts of kindness, every deed done to improve the condition of another person. It isn't to add up our points to get to heaven; it is to make a difference in the world, even in a small way. Sometimes they all seem small, but they can make a big difference in the life of another. Offering food. Sharing clothing. Jesus didn't say in our scripture lesson, "I was sick and you healed me," or "I was in prison and you set me free." He just says, "you comforted me" and

“you visited me.” The works of mercy are simple deeds and yet in these simple acts we serve Jesus.

The sign of the saved is their concern for those in need. Compassion doesn't save the person's soul or our soul. Only faith in Jesus can do that. Salvation is the gift of God for all who put their trust – their life in Jesus' hands. Compassion is the result of salvation. When we are saved, we want to show love and kindness to those in need because we also were in need.

We can't help everyone, but all of us can help someone. When we help them, we serve in Jesus' name. When we do, we will hear the words of Matthew 25:40, “Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” What we do for others, we do for Jesus. It is when we respond in love that others will feel the love of Jesus in their lives.

What we do with the Good News of Jesus has enormous consequences because the punishment of those who reject Jesus is just as eternal as the reward of those who serve him.

Our service to others reflects the condition of our hearts. When we respond to God's call to serve, we know that we are ministering to Jesus himself.

We are not to judge others. Our job is to show Christ's love by showing compassion for them, because when we do, we become Christ-like.

We must be prepared to minister to those in need, whether it is in a nursing home or the local food bank, around the corner or around the world.

The good news is that many Christians throughout the centuries, in response to the challenge of this passage from Matthew 25, have tried to help people in need, and in the process have tried to make a better world.

Jenny McGee, founder of Starfish Project, began a nonprofit jewelry company in Asia for young women involved in trafficking to have a way out. Young women as young as 12 years old up to age 40 make jewelry in a safe, dignified work environment and are taught life skills and vocational training to better their life situation. All jewelry sales go back

to the mission to restore hope to the women. They employ over 160 women and have served thousands through their community outreach services. Jenny McGee, said, “We really work to help women experience freedom, establish independence and develop careers.” You can purchase the jewelry online and help give women hope. Just look up “Starfish Project.”

She wore her characteristic Indian sari with the blue border that represented the Missionaries of Charity, the order she founded in 1949. Her years on earth had bent her already small frame, but there was nothing small about Mother Teresa’s presence. Who would have thought that this small Albanian woman would be an agent for change? Along her life journey, she became convinced that Jesus walked in the “distressing disguise of the poor,” and she set out to love him by loving those in need. In 1989, she told a reporter that her Missionaries had picked up around 54,000 people from the streets of Calcutta, India and that 24,000 or so had died in her care.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me.” Matthew 25:40.

We respond in love because Jesus first loved us. The love that we show is within the hands of all of us. Every human being is in need of love. Jesus redirects his disciple’s goals and great plans for personal success and greatness to little deeds of love in service to others.

The world is hungry and thirsty for physical food as well as spiritual food. The needs of the world have a name and a face and need to have the love of God.

We give to others the love of Christ because we have so freely received his love. We don’t know what will happen when we give love to someone.

Let us hope that we will all respond in love to those around us to make a difference.

“When did we minister to you Lord?” Jesus said, “When you fed the hungry, when you gave water to the thirsty, when you clothed the naked, when you visited in prison, you ministered to me.”

Our church is busy collecting food for our Thanksgiving Food Baskets that will get delivered before Thanksgiving Day. Then the end of November, we will have a ***Giving Tree*** that will have tags with descriptions of gifts and ages that we will be asked to purchase for children and families in need this Christmas and more food will be given at Christmas time.

Let us all take part in responding in love to the needs around us this Thanksgiving season, in our church, in our community and around the world and may we be thankful that we can respond in love, helping others, in the Name of Jesus.