

# The Watford Word

[www.watfordchurchofchrist.org](http://www.watfordchurchofchrist.org)

## What's on

- Sunday 23 June** - 10:30AM. *Osagie speaking*  
**Sunday 30 June** - 10:30AM. *Malcolm speaking*  
**Saturday 06 July** - 8AM. *Men's breakfast at the church building*  
**Sunday 07 July** - 10:30AM. *Church service (also Wellington country park service in Thames Valley)*  
**Sunday 14 July** - 10:30AM. *Speaker Kerry Mathurin*  
**Sunday 21 July** - 10:30AM. *Speaker Olyden Johnson. Annual church meeting*  
**Sunday 28 July** - 10:30AM. *Speaker Malcolm Cox*  
**Sunday 8th Sept.** *A 'thank you' service*  
**Saturday 14th Sept.** *AIM UK&I - "Family Life"*  
**Sunday 15th Sept.** *Congregational vision workshop*  
**Saturday 7th Dec.** *AIM UK&I - "World Views"*



## Christians and the Poor

### Introduction

This article explores how Christians are called to use their money and possessions to bless the poor and needy — both in our local congregation and beyond.

### God cares about the poor and needy

The Old Testament contains numerous commands and principles regarding the treatment of the poor. In Deuteronomy 15:7-11, God instructs his people to be open-handed and willing to lend to their poor brothers. The Year of Jubilee, described in Leviticus 25, mandated the periodic redistribution of land and the cancellation of debts, ensuring that poverty did not become entrenched.

The prophets also spoke passionately about justice for the poor. Isaiah 58:6-7 calls for the breaking of yokes and sharing food with the hungry. Look it up - it's powerful!

### Jesus and His Teachings

Jesus spoke extensively about wealth and poverty. His teachings highlight the importance of compassion and generosity. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*" (Luke 6:20). This beatitude sets the tone for a Christian attitude towards the poor, emphasising humility and spiritual richness over material wealth.

Consider the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) which illustrates the importance of helping those in need, regardless of their background. Furthermore, in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus explains that serving the poor and needy is equivalent to serving Him directly. Charity is not just a good deed but a divine imperative.

### The Church cared for their needy

The early Christian community exemplified radical generosity. Acts 2:44-45 reads, "*All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.*" See also Acts 4:32-37, & Acts 6:1-6.

A famine prompted Paul to arrange a collection for the impoverished Christians in the churches of Judea. He called on the Gentile churches to sacrifice for their Jewish brethren. Read 2 Corinthians 8-9 to get a flavour of the situation.

He also called on Christians to look after one another locally and not to neglect their families:

*“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Galatians 6:10)*

*“Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8)*

Also, consider this challenging statement by the Apostle John:

*“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?” (1 John 3:17)*

### **The Early Church Fathers**

Lanctantius (240-320AD) wrote, *“Be generous to the blind, the feeble, the lame, and the destitute. For they will die unless you bestow your gifts upon them. They may be useless to men, but they are serviceable to God.” Divine Institutes (ANF 7.175)*. He also records that Christians used their funds to buy back brothers and sisters enslaved by barbarian raiders.

Julian was a pagan Emperor of Rome in the 360s AD. He noticed that the Christians cared about the poor — and not just those in the church. He wrote, *“The godless Galileans do not only take care of their own poor but of ours as well!”*<sup>1</sup>

Augustine (354-430AD) stated, *“Find out how much God has given you and from it take what you need; the remainder is needed by others.”*

### **The Middle Ages**

Monks and nuns often provided food, shelter, and medical care to the needy. This period saw the establishment of church-sponsored hospitals and almshouses. Unfortunately, the belief developed that almsgiving earned forgiveness — a teaching supported by the apocryphal book Tobit, *“Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin.” (Tobit 12:8-10)*

### **The Reformation**

Luther criticised the church's wealth and called for a return to simpler, more charitable practices. Due to the abuses of the doctrine mentioned earlier, the responsibility of Christians to help the poor was less emphasised.

### **Modern Attitudes and Practice**

In contemporary Christianity, many denominations and churches run food banks, shelters and the like. Indeed, it could be argued that much of what holds our secular society together in this country is Christian people doing Christian things for the poor and needy.

In our local context, we have been blessed to help people in Ukraine, Afghanistan and Watford. HOPE worldwide remains a cherished partner in helping the poor.

### **Conclusion**

What does all this mean for us? The example and teachings of Jesus make it clear that we have a duty of care to the poor and needy in our families, our church and society. *How* much we help and *who* must be a personal conviction developed under prayer, in community and with faith.

How has this week's article spoken to you?

Your brother in Christ, Malcolm

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## Watford Contribution Details

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If you want to donate to the work of the church, go to this link and look for the 'ICC Missions standing order and gift aid form' — <https://watfordchurchofchrist.org/podcasts>

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## Watford Media

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YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj9Qa8D9zumJZdoAtARDUww>

Podcast: <https://www.podbean.com/pu/pbblog-aiinq-raef90>

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<sup>1</sup> The Christians are called 'godless' in this context because they refuse to worship the Emperor