



Matthew 25: An
Invitation to Engage

Ralph Lowe
Director of Justice Ministries

Our goal is to create a beloved community and this requires a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



PITTSBURGH
The Presbytery



Do it Anyway/Mother Teresa

- ◇ People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.
- ◇ If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.
- ◇ If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.
- ◇ If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.
- ◇ What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.
- ◇ If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.
- ◇ The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.
- ◇ Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.
- ◇ In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.

Matthew 25:31-46

- ◇ ³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?’

◇ ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,^[a] you did it to me.’ ⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Matthew 25 in the PC(USA)

- ◆ Matthew 25:31-46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. Convicted by this passage, both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor.
- ◆ To think about this passage specifically in light of race, poverty and congregational vitality and its relationship to the work of the church!

Matthew 25 in the PC(USA)

Building Congregational Vitality

Their efforts will be sustained by personal and congregational patterns and practices of prayer and worship, learning and reflection. They will be stewards of God's abundant gifts in service to God's children here and everywhere. They will demonstrate to the world God's promises and life-giving power in this age and the world to come.

Dismantling Structural Racism

Confronting deeply ingrained racist systems and structures in our communities and country takes sensitivity and stamina. Before congregations and worshiping communities can confront the harsh realities of racism, it is helpful to have a good foundation.

Eradicating Systemic Poverty

There are structures in our society that all but guarantee that people living in poverty will stay that way. Systemic poverty refers to the economic exploitation of people who are poor through laws, policies, practices and systems that perpetuate their impoverished status.

Gospel of Matthew/ Discourses

- ◇ Sermon on the Mount (ethics)
 - ◇ Blessed are the.....
- ◇ Missionary (Disciples)
 - ◇ Heal the sick, shake dust from your sandals
- ◇ Parabolic (parables)
 - ◇ Mustard Seed, Sower
- ◇ Ecclesiology (how to be church)
 - ◇ Ekklesia – the truth in love
- ◇ Eschatological (where is it headed, what is the purpose)
 - ◇ End times

God with Us!

Will of God

Justice, Justice, Justice

Faith in Action

View of the Church



God is present in Jesus, Jesus is
present in the church, Church is
present in the world!

Our relationship
with God
inspires us to
LOVE others

Agape

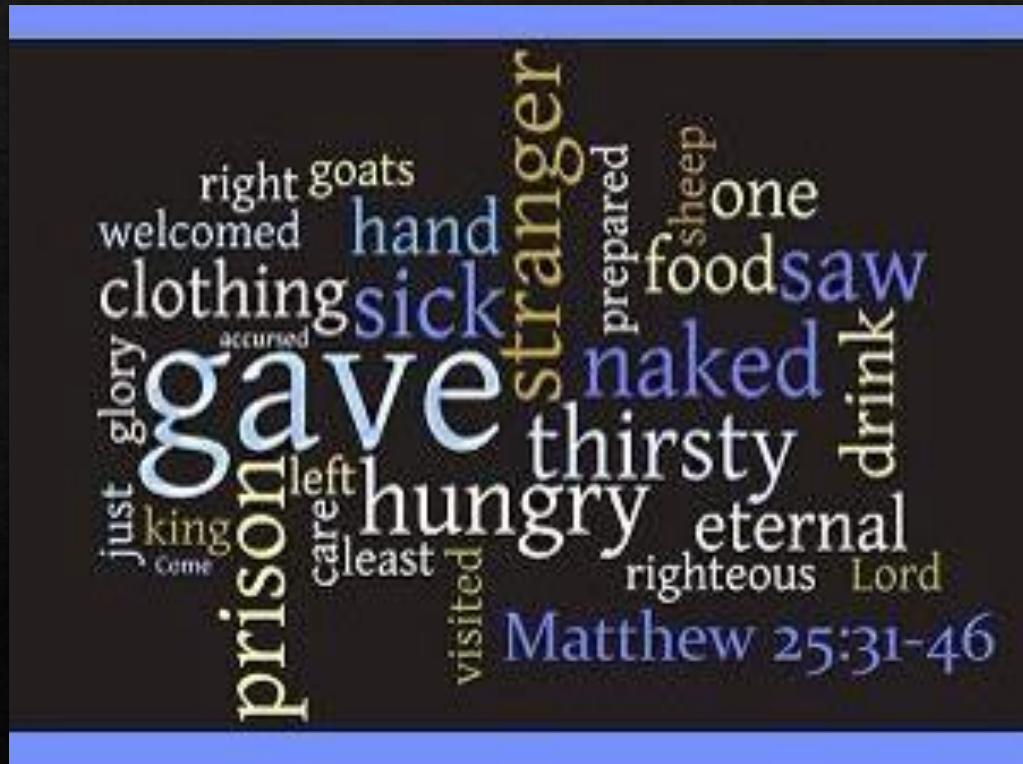
Agape is selfless, sacrificial,
unconditional love, the highest

LOVE

Beloved Community

- ◆beloved community is one where poverty, hunger, and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood..... disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation of adversaries.... Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred.... Peace with justice will prevail.

Church Engagement Markers



- ◇ Feed the hungry
- ◇ Clothing the naked
- ◇ Visit
- ◇ Giving drink
- ◇ Hospitality and invitation
- ◇ Care for sick

Systemic Poverty and Structural Racism



“Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime”





Systemic Poverty

Creating poverty wage jobs (low to no
benefits, low wages)

Symbolic Annihilation

Race Matters

Political Process, educational opportunities

American Debt (health care)





- Lack of assets
- Lack of return on assets

- Gender
- Caste
- Ethnicity
- Ability
- Age
- Health
- Share of voice
- Social status
- Access to services
- Welfare
- Age

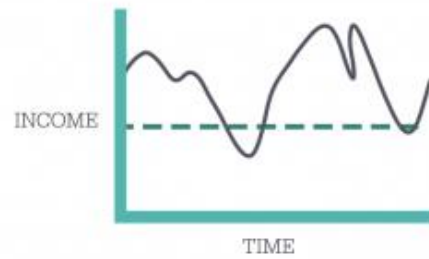
- Hazard
- Vulnerability

Inequality = systemic barriers that lead to groups of people without representation in their communities.

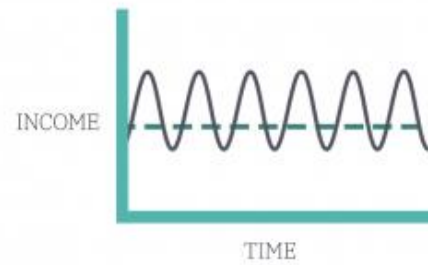
Risk = often takes the form of emergencies: natural disasters, outbreaks of disease, and conflict

THE FOUR TYPES OF POVERTY

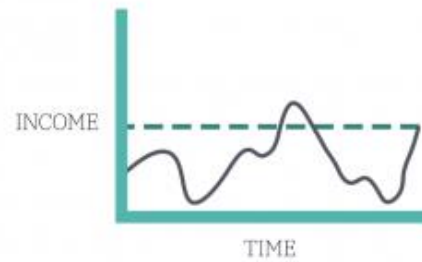
OCCASIONALLY POOR



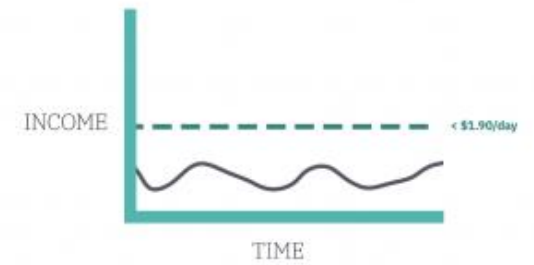
CYCLICAL POOR



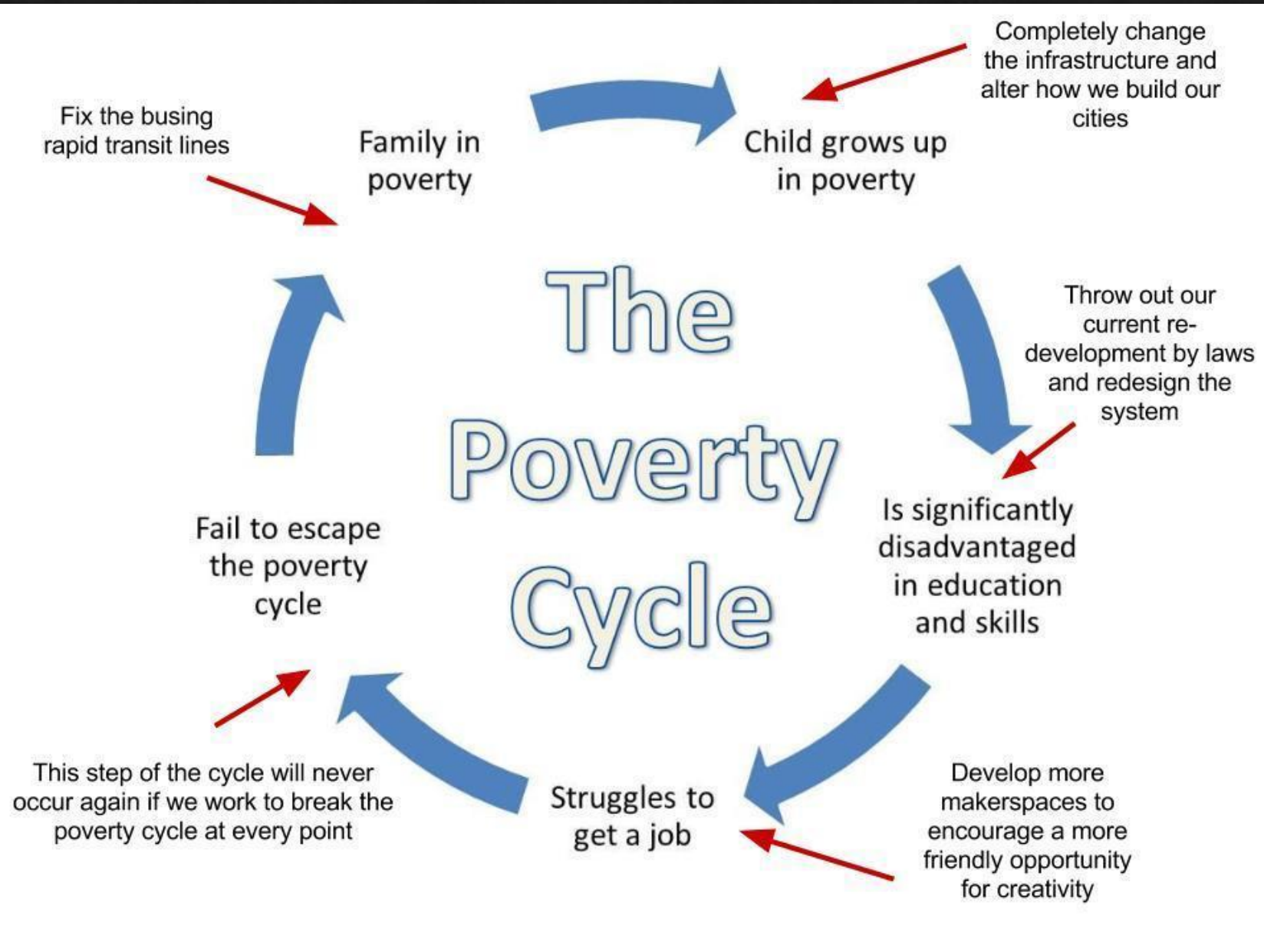
USUALLY POOR



ALWAYS POOR







Our goal is to create a beloved community and this requires a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Matthew 25/How we address Poverty

- ◇ Addressing inequality
 - ◇ Living wage, universal basic income, health care, housing support,
- ◇ Addressing risk
 - ◇ Not a one size fits all!!