

Social Gospel: What role does it play in the Evangelical Church today?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 March 2011

Preacher: Daniel Hsu

[0 : 00] I'd just like to mention what may be on next week. So thank you. Thank you. And you can forget it.

Great. Perfect. Thank you for having me here. My name is Daniel, and I work with Sean Love at St. John's Richmond. So today, we're going to be talking primarily about the social gospel, and what role does it play for evangelicals today?

And let me just give you a short answer on why is this important, as well as when we talk about the social gospel, there's always the issue of social justice and the issue of how much involvement should the church be committing their energy and time to.

So let me just give you a short answer on why that we should talk about this. I think the short answer is because it's becoming more and more important, and we should care about it.

And one of the areas that I see in my ministry, that I see this issue coming up again and again, especially in the younger generation, in the university age group, where we are getting a lot of concerns, as well as questions about, hey, what's our role as Christians?

[1 : 29] What's our role in talking about social justice? And what about the social gospel? What should we do with it? So before I identify that, I just want to give you a story on why I decided on talking about this issue.

So hopefully it's to kind of bring in some personality or something like that. So it was about 10 years ago.

It was a really cold winter, I remember. I was at downtown. I was working at a soup kitchen with First Baptist Church. And after serving for about a couple of hours, I headed towards the bus station.

And it was there, I was approached by a homeless person, a homeless man. He was looking for some change. So after talking to him, after some exchange, giving some food, and I started to leave for the bus stop.

And then suddenly he said to me, hey, wait a minute, you just came out of the church from down the street, right? And I said, sure, yes, I did.

[2 : 44] And suddenly he said, hey, isn't it the mission of your church, for Christians, to help the poor and fight for social cause? Isn't that your mandate? And that question stuck with me, because I was really confused.

What is the proper response and action from the Christian community when we're engaging with the homeless, the poor, the people who are marginalized?

What is our role? And as you move on, it's important to talk about social justice and about this kind of ministry, because it's been a buzzword around Christian circles.

Well, for two primary reasons. The first one is simple. The world's not getting better. We have disasters, as you see Japan. We have a lot of, we see a lot of pain and suffering that's still going on today, despite the great progress in technology.

But also, secondly, social concern is really trendy these days. And highly esteemed. And one place you'll see that is from commercials.

[4 : 01] If you look at all the different car commercials, you know, from Toyota to Dodge, you'll find, you'll find, basically, advertisement about how eco-friendly we are.

Right? So, that's been a great trend that we're seeing. And also, our world today, I just want to talk a little bit about our world today and what's happening.

According to the index of poverty in 2004, we see that 3.5 million Canadians are living in poverty.

And also, worldwide, there's 1.3 billion people living on less than a dollar a day, which is about, you know, the cost of, you know, pizza, according to statistics.

And also, there's problems close to home. Right? We have downtown, east side, Wally, and Surrey, homelessness, poverty, there's gang violence, you know, there's sex trafficking that's going through Canada, and also a drug-related issue.

[5 : 07] You know, due to, you know, globalization, we are aware, we're becoming more aware of what's happening. There's increasing social concern, that's politically, you know, as we look at the situation, democracy in Libya, and the war that's surrounding it.

Or as we look at, you know, environmentally, you know, going eco-friendly is the new model. You know, people are going to, you know, organic foods, you know, pollution, is now suddenly a major concern.

You know, the agriculture industry, are we living a sustainable, earth-friendly, you know, lifestyle? Animal rights, all these things. And also socially, there's, you know, women's rights in the Middle East.

There's still ongoing talk about income inequality, as well as poverty. So, who's dealing with these issues?

Who's at the forefront of social reform or social change? And, I guess, here's some pictures. I think there's a huge rise of, you know, humanitarian groups that are coming out or voicing their opinion on what should be done.

[6 : 27] but, I think the question that we should ask is, what about evangelical? What about our church? What should we do today? Should we, you know, strive to be more relevant to our society?

Because we're seeing that. That's happening. There's a huge trend. Right? Should we change the mandate of the church in order to speak the same language? Or, should we adopt a socially oriented gospel doctrine that will help us in these, you know, political or, you know, our different fronts that people are concerned about?

Right? So, furthermore, you know, should the evangelical church change its structure or change how the church implement, you know, to meet the needs of our society?

So, I think it's important for us to go back to where we started for evangelical church. So, what has been happening throughout, you know, since the beginning?

How do we deal with social issues? And, we're going to talk about two important figures today. During the 19th and 20th century, evangelicals were actually at the forefront of social reform.

[7 : 49] So, long ago, it wasn't a problem. Basically, they were, there's William Wilberforce as well as the Earl of Shaftesbury.

These were two prominent evangelical lay leaders who were very involved in the political world as well as in, you know, the social reform and in, in, in, in many sense, in campaigns that was trying to change the situation in England.

You know, and I talk about William for a little bit. He was born in August, 1759. He was a British politician and many would know him for his work against slavery in, in London or in England.

So, basically, he entered the House of Common in 1780 and he supported the parliamentary reform and, you know, and Catholic emancipation.

But he converted to evangelical Christianity in 1785. He fought against the slave trade and also, he founded the anti-slavery society.

[9 : 07] And his sponsorship of that, of the anti-slavery legislation lead to the passage of a bill abolishing slave trade in the West Indies, in British West Indies in 1807.

And the Slavery Abolition Act was passed one month after his death. So, not only so, William, he was involved in the parliament and he was also really heavily involved in opening, you know, trying to open a channel for missions work in India.

So, this is a key evangelical figure as well as Christian who basically was in the political realm having, exerting great influence over, you know, as a Christian as well as someone who is changing the social structure of the day.

The second person we're going to talk about is Shaftesbury, the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury. And he was born in April 28, 1801. And he's also a politician in the social reformer.

So, when his father, when his father died, he became, he became a, well, he became the Earl as well.

[10 : 30] Then that kind of get him in a space into the parliament and he became, well, he, sorry, he went into the parliament in 1826.

And from 1833, he led a factory reform movement in the parliament and he affected passage of the Mine Act. And so basically the act excluded all women and girls and all boys under the age of 10 from underground coal mine employment.

And also, you know, when he was there, he saw, you know, boys at age four and five working in the mines for longer than 10 hours. So basically, he made a huge contribution in that area.

Later on, he also became the president of Reg School Union where he promoted free education for children who are living on the streets or just people who can afford to go to school.

And he also led evangelical movement within the Church of England and financially supported many missionary societies. So, when the evangelical, yeah, so for, in the evangelical world, when it first started, they had a lot of influence and a lot of, a lot of power in terms of shaping and bringing equality to their world.

[12 : 06] But today, we see that there is, you know, we see Christians kind of going the other way. they're moving out of the political territory. And, although, we, a lot of evangelicals may be involved, but they no longer have a strong voice in the area of social welfare.

So, the phenomenon has changed in the evangelical world. You know, we do not have the same voice as well as political campaign we once had. And instead of being praised for social efforts, evangelicals today were accused by liberal Christians for preaching an individualistic gospel and also one that ignores the salvation and redemption of human institutions, of human society.

So, this condemnation from the liberal Christian, and also there's another pressure coming from the secular humanist movement. Basically, the movement is embedded in popular messages in our media today of reducing carbon footprints, driving hybrid cars, buying fair trade coffee.

All these are strong, powerful forces and also other ones that are basically confronting the churches today.

So, you guys should do something. You guys shouldn't just be dogmatic, you shouldn't ignore the rest. So, basically, we are confronted today to rethink our understanding, our role in human rights and other political issues.

[13 : 53] However, another problem arises from this, that the demand for Christians' social responsibility from both secular and also from within the different sects of Christianity is kind of vague.

Like, no one really knows what's being asked of the Christians. So, that term is thrown around without clarity and many times they're used as slogan without any meaning.

So, now, evangelicals have actually two tasks. They need to figure out what is, what social involvement we actually should be involved.

How do we be a blessing to the city? How much community service we need to employ? How do we do more mercy ministry? But at the same time, we need to maintain the tenets of faith, what's regarding what is important.

And, I'm just going to talk a little bit about the distinctives. According to John Stackhouse, he talked about six distinctives for evangelicals.

[15 : 10] So, these are the things that we are guarding before we even move on to mercy ministry. So, here they are. So, the first one is we're orthodox and also orthoprox, meaning that evangelicals subscribe to the main tenets, doctrinal, ethical, and liturgical of the churches to which they belong.

And also, we are essentially Christ-centric. We are Christ-centric in preaching. We emphasize the necessity of Christ's salvation work on the cross.

Evangelicals are biblical. They're biblicists. They affirm the Bible as God's written word, true in what it says, and functioning as their supreme written guide for life.

Also, we are conversionists. Basically, we believe that everyone must trust Jesus as Savior to follow him as Lord, and everyone must cooperate with God in life of growing spiritual maturity.

Also, evangelicals are missional. They actively cooperate with God in his mission of redeeming the world, and also we're transdenominational, meaning that we will gladly partner with other Christians who hold these concerns regarding to denominational stripe and work to advance the kingdom of God.

[16 : 40] The challenge is this. How do we not lose any of these when we engage in mercy ministry? is that even possible? And I think that is why it causes a great fear.

As Donald says that Christians in their well-meaning attempt to make the gospel relevant and credible to modern man, they have succeeded in emptying the faith of its biblical content.

As a result, I think we see that this is a great paralyzing factor that limits evangelical social efforts because we don't want to be associated with a different kind of gospel that kind of take out any of these things that we stand for.

And that they're willing, that we would be willing to limit our social activism in order to separate ourselves from the movement. And I think that movement, one of the movements is the social gospel.

They want to separate themselves not to be identified with them. So I think it's important for us to talk about what is actually the social gospel, the main thing for today.

[17 : 55] The social gospel is a movement that began in the late 1800s, led by Walter Rosenbach. He's a Baptist pastor who served at the toughest region of New York City.

The name that was given to that region was Hell's Kitchen. Through working with underprivileged class, Walter, he began to change from a Baptist perspective, orthodoxy, to a liberal kind of Christianity that he hopes to engage the social reality of New York City.

Because he was working in the slum, basically the lowest of the lowest place. that changed his view on looking at what the scripture says about Jesus Christ as well as about the work of Christ.

Basically, the gospel Walter depicted seeks to redeem the social structure of the society rather than just individual approach to salvation.

salvation. So the key concept he used was for the social gospel was a newly defined concept of the kingdom of God.

[19 : 17] Basically, for him, the kingdom is not interpreted from the background of the Old Testament prophets or from its relationship with the Jewish eschatological hope in the last day of Jesus.

for him, the kingdom of God, what Jesus wanted, was a movement that reforms not just individual life, but also the entire political front as well as the country, essentially what he calls social institutions.

So I think for him, it was working. When he was working with the poor, he realized that a lot of what's happening, because at the time it was also the wrath of capitalism.

So he saw that there were a lot of injustice going on, but also living in that kind of situation, it encouraged organized crime as well as people couldn't get out of their situation, and therefore that's like a perpetuating negative downward spiral.

So he believed that the work of a Christian, as well as the function of the church, is to redeem that. And he says a sinful and crooked social institution has the same effect on different individuals.

[20 : 46] So it is then the function of the church to address these issues from the top down. The social gospel movement thus gained momentum, racism, and it has actually a lot of impact throughout history.

It encouraged the Christian feminist ethics, began the liberation theology, as well as African-American rights.

As you can see, Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the person that was deeply affected by Walter's movement of social gospel.

However, at its root, I think we have to identify that this movement was infused with political agenda. And so for evangelicals, we must clarify and also look at the nature of this movement through the scripture when seeking to engage in social justice ministry.

So, it is important for us to look at what is the function of the church. Do we seek better social order or something else?

[22 : 03] And we're going to do so by examining, quickly examining Jesus' ministry, as well as examining the first century church. So when we look at the historical narrative of Jesus' ministry, it will provide important insight.

to the primary function, whether it's to uphold a sinless social order or something deeper, more profound than that.

So if we examine Jesus' life, it would definitely point us to Jesus' concern for the underprivileged. So as we see in Mark 2, there is Jesus healing the man as they lower him down.

we see Jesus working with Jesus healing the leopard in Mark 10. We also see that Jesus was hanging out with the outcasts, with the prostitute.

And from this point of view, it may seem quite consistent with what the social gospel argues. However, other parts of the scripture reveals that Jesus came from more than just establishing a perfect social order.

[23 : 18] Jesus' ministry has, although has numerous social implications, but all miracles were evidence to his true identity, which is the true Messiah, the King of all kings.

Contrary to Walter's view on the Kingdom of God, when Jesus pronounced the arrival of the Kingdom, he also called for repentance and acceptance of the good news.

And the good news was not arrival of a newly restored social order, but actually the first arrival of the King himself.

The miracles of healing identified the unique power of Jesus, God's compassion on human brokenness, and authority to restore human brokenness.

So in Mark 2, 1 to 12, Jesus first forgives the sin of the paralyzed man before he deals with his physical condition. Although it may seem elementary, it is crucial to note that the purpose and the climax of Jesus' ministry is the crucifixion on the cross and the resurrection that follows.

[24 : 30] The mandate of Jesus can be summarized by Paul in Romans 5, verse 8 to 9. But God shows his love for us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

And Pastor Tim Keller suggests that the church represents Christ to the world, following his preaching, an example by working to heal all the effects of the fall, thereby manifesting the redemptive kingdom of God.

The internalized reality of the gospel is the primary motivation of Christians to show mercy. If we truly know and comprehend fully that we were enemies of God, saved by mercy alone, we are both open and generous to the outcasts and the unlovely.

And besides the atoning work of Christ, Jesus' ministry and the early church were not that different. They proclaimed the kingdom of God, they appointed leaders to the community and taught appropriate lifestyle expected for each member of the community, and relied on the Holy Spirit to work through the community.

The early church placed social ministry as secondary rather than the primary because the apostles knew that the function of the church were not dependent on social work but rather around the word of God that had eternal impact.

[26 : 00] We see that in the account in Acts 6, verse 3. When the early church faced the challenge of social injustice as well as inequality, apostles responded by appointing men with great reputation to serve while at the same time they deliberately guarded the role of worship, prayer, and the ministry of the word in the church.

The ministry of the early church did inspire a lot of social change and reformation. However, it was done alongside the proclamation of the redemptive power of Christ.

Thus, the priority of the evangelical church ought to be focused on the word of God and prayer as the early church did while not neglecting the concern for the underprivileged.

A solid understanding of the depth of the gospel ultimately moves the believer towards ministry that are relevant to the needs of people. So we're going to talk a little bit about the evangelical response to this social gospel challenge.

The theological view that evangelicals hold for social relief is fundamentally different from Walter's social gospel. The social gospel and evangelicalism interpret the gospel message and the function of the church very differently.

[27 : 27] The implication is that evangelicals no longer need to shut away from mercy ministries with the fear of being identified as part of the social gospel because they're fundamentally different.

However, at the same time, it is all the more crucial for evangelicals to continue to teach and proclaim the gospel according to the scripture while engaging in social concerns.

John Stott adds to this. He says, social action is a partner of evangelism. As partners, the two belong to each other and yet are independent of each other.

One stands on its own fate in its own right alongside the other. Neither is means to the other or even manifestation of the other for each is an end in itself.

So I believe that with a healthy view of the gospel, evangelicals can continue to engage in the complex social issues of today with better reflection.

[28 : 31] And church leader must ask two crucial questions regarding to the church decision for social justice ministry.

And those two questions are for what am I responsible and to whom am I responsible? Right? So for Christians like Christ, we are first responsible to God than to the surrounding.

The order must not be reversed. So in order to continue to work the work of evangelism and promoting Christian faith, evangelicals must engage, still engage in serving the poor, helping the needy.

But I think the important thing, you know, we do need to distinguish ourselves from the movement, but we ought to emphasize the primary function of the church.

And also we must teach the whole gospel before developing, before we go on and do ministry. And the social gospel, in conclusion, it's an ideal of redeeming social institution.

[29 : 47] It's a social change with social change as the main goal. The social gospel movement has made significant contribution to the world, but their emphasis is selective to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

It has put the concern of social justice ministry as the priority and the prime reason for the church. So the task for evangelicals in handling this hot and complex issue is actually going to the scripture to capture what really is the heart of Christianity, instead of just scrambling to make something happen due to the pressure that we're receiving from liberal theologians or from a secular demand for service.

And I believe that it's true, that as we know what it means to, as Romans says, to know that we are no longer enemies of Christ, that we are empowered by God, that it gives us a better motivation, not guilt, when we go to serve others.

So I'm going to end here, and yeah, so I think it is time perhaps for any comments, if you want to make, add to this discussion, since it is a learner's exchange.

So, yeah, or if you need questions for our talk today. You mentioned Wilberforce and Chasperi.

[31 : 28] In the 20th century, in the 60s, Francis Schaefer came to the forefront. Is there anyone like him now who is inspiring young people to get into involved in evangelicals?

Mm-hmm. I think, well, I believe Timothy Keller has been one who is very vocal about engaging in city ministries, as well as Tony Campolo for his work with social justice.

thing. But I don't think there's a huge, like, I think the culture as well as what happened if we compared to the, kind of like the political round today, right, is largely secular compared to what was happening during the time of William Wilberforce.

not that they're completely Christian either, but there was, I think the Christian boys was, in many sense, accepted, not so much today.

That's my understanding. Does anyone want to contribute to that? talk about others?

[32 : 55] No one in Canada that I can think of. I think Timothy Keller would be the biggest one right now because he's such a force and even though the movement in the States. Right.

But I guess, like, the interesting thing is he, he, although he has such attention, but at the same time he's still kind of in the Christian realm.

is still not, you know, permeating through every area of society. There are people that came to us in a different way in terms of reform, and Wilberforce might be a good example of that.

He had unusual political opportunities and, inspired by his Christian faith, used that. But in the latter half of the 1800s, there were a lot of people who went into the community, not from their churches, and said, we want to change these things there, not we want to change the church.

and I remember William Booth in that Octavia Hill and Children's Aid Societies, prison reform with John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, hospital nursing with Florence Nightingale.

[34 : 15] These people did say they were consecrated by their faith to do these things. And instead of trying to change the churches they were in, they went forth and did it some other way.

But we seem to have an unusual amount of difficulty in combining the work of looking after people with spreading the gospel.

And by the large churches have polarized on that issue. Some of them, I think, are getting back to it. I'm not sure that we are. You know, a street person needs \$2.25 to get to our church to bake.

I mean, excuse me, we are not having this on our doorstep and we don't have to deal with it the way, for instance, First Baptist or First We've all downtown churches would need to.

And I think that's always the toughest question that every church has to answer. What is our role? And I think what you said was correct. If we look at history, we see so many Christian men and women who are just so involved and who are making huge contributions.

[35 : 21] and impact speaking for the underprivileged. But I think at the same time, the tension is when we look at today now, so who's there? So what's our role?

What are we supposed to do? And a lot of what I'm seeing too is a lot of people adopt basically the social gospel theology where they say, hey, that means we as Christians, maybe we should help as we look at these problems, it just begin to change to say, hey, I think that's our role as Christian, therefore that's what it means.

And I think that's kind of the greatest danger that we are seeing as well in this tension. I'm involved with youth with admissions since 13 years, and I would definitely say Lord Cunningham should go in this time.

Thank you. Would you like to tell us a little bit more about him? No. The worst case scenario for me would be the United Church.

They embraced the social gospel and said, by the way, we'll take Jesus out. All we need is the social gospel. Whereas the Salvation Army is fully faithful to the gospel and is Canada's biggest worker of mercy on a daily basis always.

[36 : 59] compare those two institutions maybe and you have insight here. Right. Yeah, I just really wanted to not mention any names.

But I think that's a really good analysis. I remember looking at, I don't know if you guys know, but there's a handout newspaper called The 24 where a lot of people get when they're on the bus.

I remember looking at it and one of the things that stood out during one of the seasons was an article on the United Church, on all the homeless ministries that they've been doing downtown.

And the interesting thing about the article is that as I was reading through it, at first I was pretty excited that Christians are being recognized for something.

But when I looked at it and looked at the, essentially their explanation to what they're doing, basically it goes along to be, well Jesus was a great social reformer, so therefore the church has to be as well.

[38 : 10] So basically that's a huge problem, especially in that denomination where it's completely pulled away what the real point of why Jesus was on here, was on earth.

and at the same time, that's the message that's being sent to a non-believer. Basically that's like, oh great, that's the point of being a Christian, is to do nice things.

So really there isn't any difference between a Buddhist doing some nice things or someone doing social relief versus a Christian doing it.

So in a sense I feel that the great danger in that is it kind of paints a very politically correct message for Christians, but yet we don't want to be politically correct.

The whole thing just collapsed, I would say collapsed the entire message. So I don't know if I've responded to that. I think one of the from my research, one of the things I came across over and over again is it is that criticism that evangelicals don't care and they think that since Christ is going to come, it doesn't matter what we do to the environment.

[39 : 58] I think that's kind of like a picture. I don't think it's rightly painted for evangelicals because if we look at a lot of the literature as well as work over the past century, we see that there are still admiration for the environment.

But I do believe, sorry, I didn't do extensive research into that area because I think it would just be like rabbit hole with a lot of people with really angry things to say. But at the same time, I think I'm also just wondering this in my head, is that whether the whole thing about taken care environment is a concern because of a media hype, because now everybody cares about it.

Therefore, looking back at evangelicals, what I'm really trying to say is I'm wondering how much of that is valid as well due to the fact that if we look at media, it's just so blown out of proportion.

I think there is some truth in that perhaps as evangelicals, we don't have a huge campaign about protecting the environment.

But I'm just curious, maybe we could open that up. What do you guys think about that area? Do you think it is important for churches to have ministries to show people that we care about the world environmentally?

[41 : 47] Or is that something that's not necessary? What do you guys think? The second part of the question is do we take the Old Testament seriously? The environmentally sensitive literature that you can find is in the first five books of the Bible and Job and Shams and absolutely fundamental.

And how much, if we could put it into a percentage, you know, like for teaching at the church, how much percentage do you think should be the focus for that message?

Well, that's a trap, isn't it? Well, I personally don't know. I just want to, yeah, I just want to, like, 32%. There's a Christian organisation, Russia, where they're Christians in Consolation, and they have a place in the border, and they do a really good job in teaching Christians as far as how to look after creation.

So maybe it'd be a good idea to have somebody for later to talk about what we do at the end of the Christians. Right. God's been coming up sporadically, so I'll try to be cohesive, but to answer your question, how much percentage, I think the church should dedicate 100% teaching the Bible.

So whatever the Bible percentage of the Bible dedicated to teaching about the environment, that would be it. That's pretty coherent. other thoughts.

[43 : 38] Talk about social gospel, but going back to your initial slide about relevance. Among evangelicals, I hear a huge relevance ban waving around.

I hear workshops from evangelicals, co-cocer evangelicals, holding workshops like how to be a Christian in the postmodern world.

In a nutshell, they're preaching things like, you can't preach the Bible or preach using the gospel using the Bible nowadays because of social trends, etc.

You have to take them onto bubble tea and chat other stuff with them. My decision on that, the power of the gospel is in the power of the word.

It is the word that has the power to change life. It's the word that has the power to bring people to God, not whatever we do. So, taking that to social concerns, do we really need to intentionally put forth a ministry or put forth an agenda to address social issue as primary?

[45 : 13] I don't think social issues should be a primary around church because it is the word of God that has power to change people's lives and effectively to change whatever's corrupt around our social society.

I'm not saying that Jesus did not heal the sick or did not care about property. But, Christ's ministry on earth is focused on helping the poor.

It's focused on doing the good. People can point out two passages, the good Samaritan, the parallel good Samaritan and the young rich ruler. If you read those two correctly, is Jesus really talking about, oh, do good and you will be saved?

Sell your all your possession, to be saved. No, Jesus is putting those two persons into a difficult, into a position of impossibility.

Because you teach a lot of stories, you can't fulfill the two greatest commandments. This young rich ruler's story, you can't be saved because you have done these commandments from you.

[46 : 32] So, Christ's ministry is always from the point of field that what is impossible with man is possible with God and the gospel, of course, is only from Christ, which is the word, not from social, not from a drastic social issue, but it should be branched off from the central word itself.

right. I spent a lot of years working in the missions downtown and you came in at seven o'clock, well, us people don't have watches, but you just have to learn.

And 20 minutes, putting out the gospel real strong because their brains are affected by substance abuse.

20 minutes for people giving testimonies and then the best food you could possibly feed them. And an awful lot of the people took them into their homes.

I had a halfway house for a good long time. One of the fellows that used to come to that lived in my halfway house to His Honourist Church. And to me, that was the joining of both sides of this.

[48 : 00] I'm not in that area now. I'm too old for it. It's tremendously challenging. But I'm helping with a program in a community center.

The first thing I was told, you're not allowed to preach. And the second thing I was told, not to grab someone by the net and preach at them. And these fellows, they'll come to me and say, I'm a believer.

I'm still into drugs. I don't want to be. Some of them say, well, I like the drugs, but I don't like the result of it. And in this situation, you can't be as hardcore.

Right. But it's amazing what you can get done. Mm-hmm. And so, and we know the churches are not ready for the bums on the street, which to me is unfortunate.

We hope that they get cleaned up enough to come in. Right. Yeah. But I don't see that there doesn't have to be a disengagement between the two things.

[49 : 20] Great. Thank you. Hey, Dan. Kind of between these two questions, do you think that if we're going to do mercy ministry, it always needs to be tied to a gospel ministry?

Or can you, should we as Christians be doing it independently of a gospel ministry? Okay. I think I'm going to try to tie all three up because they're all really important.

I think as we talked about today, that this is a really complex situation. This is a really difficult, you know, the government is trying to do something with it, but it's just so complex.

And when we're talking about the church, responding to when we have heavy preaching in the meal, what happens is it comes across to the media as, oh, hey, this is switch and bait.

You're switching and baiting. You're saying here's some food, but you have to listen to the gospel. So we run into that problem. So suddenly, when that happens, we'll hear criticism.

[50 : 35] It seems that it's always going to be a losing battle. It doesn't matter what we do. It doesn't matter what we do. Someone will have something against it.

And perhaps in ways, it's because we're not ready for it, we don't know what exactly helps. But at the same time, because not just the complexity of it, it's the changing nature of poverty, of different social issues, it becomes really difficult to pinpoint what exactly we should do and how do we incorporate the gospel in all these areas.

things. So that's why, I think that's why it's all the more crucial to have the first things first. What is the gospel?

I think it's to understand it within your immediate sphere of Christians, to know what are we doing as a church, what is the primary function?

I think it's to actually know that and teach that so that everybody is on the same page before anything else can be done. And also, I think it's from that conviction, from that transformation, I think it engages Christians to think thoughtfully about how do we bring the gospel and its entire message, not just Jesus wants you to be happy, healthy, and not on the street.

[52 : 07] How do we bring the whole gospel and that penetrates them personally and to the core and deals with sin? How do we do that in the appropriate way?

So in other words, I'm answering yes, it's a must. I think when we don't have the gospel, that's what happens with the United Church. That's what happens. The whole church starts becoming like a nice humanitarian club with Christian logos or a slogan on it.

Okay, just because I've talked to you twice and not at all an opinion on it, and how I love you will not like it. That's okay. I'm kind of with you guys, but not quite.

Don't we feed someone because they're hungry? hungry. We've got food, they don't get hungry, that's why you feed them. It's an image of God issue. It's an anthropology issue.

They're creating the image of God, that's why you feed them. We are gospel first, but we also are light in the world. And I'm completely against the idea of bait and switch, where we're only going to feed you if you listen to us about Jesus.

[53 : 26] I think that's completely antibiblical. It's completely contra-biblical. You feed them because they're hungry, that's why you feed them. And I think the whole point really is we need to really dig deeper into why do we kind of like the reason, do we just feed them because they're hungry, or what is the even deeper reason of what Christ is?

Because other than that, if we don't have that, it just becomes guilt. It just becomes, oh, I feel guilty. I should, you know, I'm a Christian, I should do these nice things, but it needs to be deeper rooted.

Sorry. I think that the impulse to reach out to do this quote-unquote mercy ministry comes out of the call to knowing in your heart what Jesus has done for you.

I don't do this I don't think a church or an individual should be, ought to be doing it because they're guilty.

I mean, it has become, because God has called you, or God has called us as a congregation to reach out. We can't, we'll just run dry.

[54 : 51] Right. Because it's not coming from the right place. Right. So do you have a question in the back? I'm just going to say again, my sister-in-law and brother-in-law were missionaries in India for 13 years.

And following that, when the earthquake in Pakistan happened, my brother-in-law was asked to go over to help because he was understanding the language. And as a result, he came back to the U.S.

because he's American, and he's done work called Eden Vigil, which is along the lines of Russia, and it partners with this group of Russia. And it was very interesting because they got a lot of different responses in the church that was basically their sending church.

And one of those responses that people questioned was what is this going to do? I mean, basically, my brother-in-law was saying, we have this devastation, we see the people being affected by tsunamis and earthquakes and such.

What are we doing for these people? How are we caring for the earth? How are we presenting the gospels? How are we making this a viable thing?

[56 : 09] And the interesting thing from that is that people questioned them leaving and starting this work. people and a lot of their support and a lot of their support.

It was a really strange response. You would think that the church would have been supportive, but instead people fell away from it and stopped the support of them.

They were still going out and reaching people through the gospel. I think there's also that complexity. I know speaking honestly for myself, I could come up with 30 or 50 theological reasons not to give, but simply because I rather spend it on myself.

There's always that tension as well that's going on. It's kind of like the church. Are we saying that when we put the focus on preaching and the word ministry, how much of it is because we really believe that versus we just want to indulge in our lifestyle.

That's also a challenging question. Just as your comment about the bait and switch stuff, I worked for the Salvation Army for five years in the Belkin House set up, which is a hospital for men.

[57 : 32] They don't use the slogan soap, soup, and salvation anymore, but that really was what they were about. I don't see anything wrong with letting people know this is the thing that motivates us to feed you.

God loved us and we are demonstrating our love for you in this way. St. James said, be doers of the word, not hearers only. So being doers and hearers goes together and presenting them with the gospel over lunch, they can tune out if they want to.

But you are not flying under false colors. And this is what the United Church did. And they lost it. Right. I think you really hit the nail. I think that's the exact point.

Really it is to, I think going back again is to understand what our role is and be firm and secure in that, to have that conviction so that in the ministries we do, we're not apologetic.

Like, you know what, we are Christians and here's what we believe and this is an outcome, our expression of worship. I think that's really where the heart is, not replacing one or the other.

[58 : 42] So did you have something to mention? Well, I suppose, yes, I haven't got my thoughts very much for the reason, but when we were speaking about this sort of social responsibility, I see a lot of when people minister, they're ministering down to, they're not with.

And I think that's one of the big problems. You know, in a church, or as individuals like us, going out and ministering to people that serve street people or people like that, when Jesus met these people, he made friends of them.

He was willing to meet them and be friends on 11th. Are we? You know, we're sort of ministering. And it's not just in street people, it's anybody that's different.

I had a very close friend who was very physically handicapped, but she was bright as a bell. And she said, all these groups put on things for them.

But she said, you know, when I always noticed ones, they didn't sit down and eat with us. They ministered to them. And that's one of the big problems I think in a society.

[60 : 09] We minister to street people. people, but we do not, we do not engage with them. That's why places like AE and the Salvation Movement actually have a program where people that have come off the street then minister to others.

That's why they're successful. Because they're all on the same level. They're not ministering down. And I don't know how you get over that problem, but that is a big problem.

And there's a church, an Emanuel church in Vancouver on the east side. They have probably 50% of their congregation are either recovering or drug addict.

And the other 50% are, you know, ordinary people. A lot of the white side people. But they come together more as a congregation. Right.

How do you get over that problem? Right. And also, like, how do you invite the church to be in that? Because we've already kind of separated ourselves from that community.

[61 : 16] It's true. I really want to invite people into my family or women into my house. And am I going to really be friends with them? Not just help them?

Because welfare helps them. Everybody helps them. It's another handle. They don't need handouts. They need help. Great. It was in the 18th century or before that if in the end of the church, anyway, if any poor people entered a parish, the church was responsible for them.

And they, of course, the church, I'm known for trying to move them on, but they were responsible by British law.

Right. That they were responsible. Is that impressive? Yeah. And that's, yeah, that's really.

So we'll take one last question. This whole issue really revolves about the understanding of the headship of Jesus Christ. Because if you don't have a clear understanding of the headship of Jesus Christ, you're going to be flopping around like a fish out of water.

[62 : 34] Right. On all social issues. So when you have that clear understanding that Jesus Christ is the leader of the church, he's head of the church, by virtue of his father, and all things belong to him, and he has control over all things, then you can sit down and take a look at the scriptures, and it's all there.

You have to follow his leadership in all things. Right. And that should be the gospel. Right. I completely agree with you. And I think it is to remember, too, that we are free, right?

We enjoy that freedom. And that freedom is not we do whatever we want to build our life on whatever we like, but that freedom is also that love.

You know, as Christ showed us that we have greater capacity as well as freedom to love those who, you know, the society said, hey, they're just, you know, a waste of time or neglected.

Great. Thank you very much. Yeah. Can we... Thank you. Thank you. Can we quickly maybe pray for, you know, as we speak about this issue, maybe we could just quickly pray for the people that we talked about.

[63 : 54] Well, Father God, we thank you for this morning for us to gather together and just reflect about just very serious issues in life, Lord. And God, we confess that we probably are more focused on ourselves and our lives and things that surround us than for the aching of the world, Lord.

But Father God, I pray that you give us your eyes to see those who are in need as well as compel our hearts to do what is merciful and just.

But Lord, ultimately, let us do so in a manner of worship to bring you glory, Lord, because we know we have a God who gave just unreserved, with your unreserved love, who gave us Christ, Lord.

So help us also to love this ministry, but at the same time, love the Word of God and not stray away, Lord. I pray for the people downtown, for those who are without food, Lord, would you provide for them?

In Christ's name, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[65 : 34] Amen.