

'THE USUAL DAILY WAGE' SABBATH ECONOMICS

PROPER 20, YEAR A

Lectionary Texts: Exodus 16:2-15 Jonah 3:10-4:11 Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 Psalm 145:1-8
Matthew 20:1-16 Philippians 1:21-30

Focus Text: Matthew 20:1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; ⁴ and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. ⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' ⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' ⁹ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹² saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' ¹³ But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

NRSV

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family... The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land. Leviticus 25:10, 23-24

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt. Deuteronomy 24:14-15

Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor. Proverbs 22:9

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Acts 2:44-47

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter... it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little." 2 Corinthians 8:9-10, 14-15

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

BY CHRIS LIU BEERS, PROGRAM ASSOCIATE,
NC COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The “Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” – a parable unique to Matthew – has always fired the imagination of interpreters. John Chrysostom, the 4th century theologian and preacher, puts it this way: “What then is to be understood from these words? From other parables also it is possible to see the same point. The son who was righteous is shown to have suffered from this same fault when he saw his prodigal brother enjoying great honor, even more than himself. . . . In the kingdom of heaven there is no one who justifies himself or blames others in this way; perish the thought!” Another way to summarize this parable is to say that it is most concerned with overturning society’s notions of just rewards, that we get what we deserve. In other words, it highlights God’s extravagant generosity, a sovereign “graciousness that is not based on what is earned” (Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 195).

In Jesus’ day, it was not uncommon for day laborers to stand at the city gates and marketplaces, looking for a day’s work and a day’s wage. Then, as now, sometimes unscrupulous employers would hire a laborer for a day and then refuse to pay him until later – an unfair practice that threatened to send the “working poor” into debt and starvation. In today’s parable, though, the unexpected “problem” does not arise because the employer disregarded the teachings of the Torah (see Lev. 19:13, Deut. 24:14-15); rather, the employer went above and beyond what the law required – paying some of his workers a day’s wage for less than a day’s work. It is the degree of the employer’s generosity and extravagance that strikes Jesus’ audience as scandalous.

The parable, which is masterfully told, has been strategically placed in Matthew so that no one would miss its significance. In chapter 19, the “rich young ruler” asks Jesus what he must do to have eternal life. And Jesus responds with an answer that should make every middle-class Christian shudder. Of course, the young man goes away grieving, “for he had many possessions.” It seems as though the young man had labored all day like some of the workers in Jesus’ parable, keeping the commands of Torah while at the same time amassing possessions and wealth. He had done nothing wrong. And yet he still missed the point, that God’s generosity surpasses that which we can earn. It is precisely because of God’s generosity that such a person can be free to give up his or her worldly possessions.

This incident is followed by a conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Peter tries to one-up the young man, and says to Jesus: “Look, we *have* left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” Peter’s rash assertion belies that he too has missed the point, for apparently God is not in the business of keeping score! Jesus tells his disciples that in this kingdom, in this *economics*, “many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.” It is in this context that he then relates the story of the workers in the vineyard.

You would think that the disciples would have gotten the point, but amazingly right after this parable, the mother of the sons of Zebedee asks Jesus for her two sons to sit at his right and left hand in his kingdom. It’s another example of the all-too-human desire to somehow earn the gifts we seek from God. Jesus, of course, will have none of it.

Signs of God’s abundant, radically-reorienting generosity are scattered like seeds throughout Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount (5-7), the Parable of the Sower (13:3-9), the Parable of the Unforgiving Slave (18:23-35), today’s passage, and many others all show how the kingdom of heaven is characterized by a different economics than our earthly societies, in which the rich get richer and in which “God” only helps those who help themselves. The kingdom of heaven is not a rat-race; rather, it is Sabbath abundance.

PASTORAL REFLECTION

BY BARBARA ZELTER, FORMER PROGRAM
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How the employees howled! At least the ones who had worked all day. Because those slackers who had only worked for an hour received the same daily wage as the ones who had been there since early in the day, and they had worked through the noonday heat!

The employees would howl today too. Imagine if you worked all day, every day, and someone else working at the same job for only one hour per day received the same salary. But in Jesus’ day, workers needed their daily wage in order to survive. Several biblical teachings reprimanded those employers who failed to pay the daily wage at the end of the day. (See Lev. 19:13, Deut. 24:14-15, James 5:4.)

In Jesus’ economics, the one represented here by the generous landowner, all workers received the pay they needed in order to survive, even if it seemed unfair to those who had worked all day. Sabbath economics is Jesus economics. As Ched Myers notes, Sabbath economics is about the grace of receiving what the Creator (employer) gives and the responsibility not to take more than is needed. Wide gaps between rich and poor are not part of God’s plan, and God’s people are called to be part of God’s generosity so that all have enough on which to live.

What might this mean for us? The practice of Sabbath economics means at least these things:

First, it means thinking theologically. We must take seriously the manna story in Exodus, which said that the people should take just enough of the gift for the day, that hoarding stuff would make it all rot. We must also take seriously the Jubilee story of Leviticus, that wealth gaps should be regularly and intentionally undone by returning to the poor and the indebted what had been taken from them. And we must take seriously the central message of Jesus, that there is enough in the beloved community (the kingdom) for all. This vision of plenty is illustrated in the gospel stories of the multitudes who threw in their family portions to make a feast that fed thousands with loaves and fishes (the only miracle described by all four gospels; see Matt. 14:13-22; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15).

Second, it means looking at our own money and faith habits. The “Sabbath Economics Household Covenant” encourages us to review our habits around assets (surplus capital), debt (negative capital), giving, the environment, consumption patterns, solidarity with those who are marginalized, and, most radically of all, how we adhere to the commandment to honor the Sabbath, giving ourselves rest and reflection and renewal.

Third, it means looking at congregational and denominational resources. Does your congregation have a savings account, some money held in reserve? Might those assets be held in an institution which works with those for whom it is difficult to get help from major financial institutions? (The Self-Help Credit Union in Durham is nationally known for helping people of modest means to buy homes and start businesses.) Or might your congregational or denominational funds be better invested in something like Oikocredit, which supports poor entrepreneurs in the global South, who need small amounts of credit in order to become self-supporting rather than dependent on foreign aid?

When I heard of these venues for “moving money for social change,” I switched my accounts to Self-Help and Oikocredit. What a blessing to know that our average financial assets might be directed toward our values and ministry, in ways that might yield results greater than all our charitable donations and activist efforts combined! Leaders of the Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church in North Carolina are already engaged in this conversation about the transfer of assets for a gospel vision of the common good.

As Christians, many of us have for too long followed only the path of mercy and charity, while ignoring justice—the structural and systemic transfer of wealth and power so that none have too much, and all have enough. In doing so, we ignore much of the jubilee vision that Jesus claimed as he stepped into public ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). Sabbath economics offers fresh ways to understand our relations with the Bible and our money. And it is expressed in the generosity of the employer who pays the wage that people need to survive. May it infuse how we read the Bible, how we practice our faith, and how we invest our money.

WORSHIP AID - ‘THE USUSAL DAILY WAGE’

RESPONSIVE READING

As we enjoy our abundance of wealth,
we pray for all who are hungry.
May they be freed from unnecessary lack of sustenance.

Hear your people’s plea.

As we celebrate the joys of creation
We pray for the people who are denied their share.
May the earth and everything in it
be for the benefit of all human beings.

Hear your people’s plea.

As we benefit from cheap farm labor,
we pray for the producers and workers
who are deprived of their just reward.
May all created goods flow freely and abundantly for all.

Hear your people’s plea.

(adapted from “For the Benefit of All,” by Tony Singleton, at www.cafod.org.uk/resources/worship/trade)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious God, you have given us riches in abundance. We confess that by sin, selfishness, and neglect, we have made a world of suffering and sorrow, of waste and exploitation. We confess that too often we only stand by as others bear the weight of affliction – that we hoard your gifts, rather than share your wholeness and plenty. Lord of abundance, in your mercy, open our hearts and hands, for all we have belongs to you. **Amen.**

(adapted from "Confessions," at www.portsmouth.anglican.org/fileadmin/images/bishop/liturgy/ecology_texts.rtf)

SUGGESTED HYMNS

✠ <i>Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove</i>	AM 191/AZ 160/CH 248/NCH 281/ PH 126/TH 510
✠ <i>For the Healing of the Nations</i>	CH 668/GC 719/MW 685/NCH 576/ UMH 428
✠ <i>I Don't Know About Tomorrow</i>	AM 446/CM 202
✠ <i>Let Your Heart Be Broken</i>	BH 611/MW 582
✠ <i>O For a World</i>	CH 683/NCH 575/PH 386
✠ <i>Son of God, Eternal Savior</i>	LW 394/MW 648/NCH 542
✠ <i>We Give Thee but Thine Own</i>	AZ 520/BH 609/CH 382/CM 535/ LW 405/MW 657/PH 428

◆ Hymnal Legend ◆

✠ AM – African Methodist Episcopal
✠ AZ – African Methodist Episcopal Zion
✠ BH – Baptist Hymnal
✠ CH – Chalice Hymnal (Disciples of Christ)
✠ CM – Christian Methodist Episcopal
✠ GC – Gather Comprehensive (Rom Cath)
✠ LW – Lutheran Worship
✠ MW – Moravian Book of Worship
✠ NCH – New Century Hymnal (UCC)
✠ PH – Presbyterian Hymnal
✠ TH – The Hymnal 1982 (Episcopal)
✠ UMH – United Methodist Hymnal

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

God's Abundant Goodness

Generous Savior, who daily feeds us bread from heaven,
You have given us bread to eat not of our own making –
Your own self and Your own creation.
What is it that You so richly provide for us
and ask nothing in return but that we share Your bread with others?
Yet, we grab Your bounty for ourselves alone.
We lay hold of silver and gold,
amassing riches beyond our need.
We buy lands and mark them off as if our own.
We hide away Your provision for a day that may never come.
Like children, we become angry when You ask us to share.
We fear that we may find ourselves without.
We complain when we cannot have more and more.
Generous Spirit, change our hearts so that
we not let Your bounty rot in our hands.
Cause us to remember Your holy promises.
In the Old Testament and New, You have taught us that
You can spread a table in the wilderness --
manna from heaven and water from a rock,
food for thousands from a few broken loaves and fishes.
You provide our daily bread in abundance.
All can eat and be satisfied
if we do not take too much.
Give us the spirit of "Sabbath economics" and
cause us to remember that Your bread is ours for sharing.
Generous God, let the many, not just the few, celebrate your abundant goodness.

(by B. J. Morton)

Everlasting riches

Living God, call to us,
For our altars are draped with cloth of gold
And silver ornaments adorn our worship.*

Creator God, awaken us,
For our hearts are cloaked with cloth of gold
And silver coins adorn our dreams.

Loving God, forgive us
For we trade our lives for cloth of gold
And silver coins that buy our silence.

Lord, open our hearts wide to your wisdom
And our lives to your compassion*
As we walk towards the everlasting riches
Of your kingdom.

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For the Right Use of God's Gifts

Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor you with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

(The Book of Common Prayer, p. 827)

ADDITIONAL HELPS

▣ QUOTES ▣

Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received – only what you have given: a full heart, enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice, and courage.

St. Francis of Assisi

Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt himself from the great duties imposed by justice. The guaranteeing of basic justice for all is not an optional expression of largesse but an inescapable duty for the whole of society.

Catholic Social Teaching – Economic Justice for All, #120

The causes that lie behind much sickness and human suffering are short-sightedness and greed. Health for all can be achieved only through the organized demand by people for greater equality in terms of land, water, services, and basic rights.

Dr. David Werner

No one may claim the name of Christian and be comfortable in the face of hunger, homelessness, insecurity, and injustice found in this country and the world.

Catholic Social Teaching – Economic Justice for All, #27

The world is like an uneven load.

On one side, many people and little food.

On the other side, lots of food and few people.

An uneven load is dangerous. It is apt to tip over at any moment.

Brazilian Proverb

Nature provides a free lunch, but only if we control our appetites.

William Ruckelshaus

▪ PERSONAL VIGNETTE ▪

Self-Help:

Creating Ownership and Economic Opportunity Across NC

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is Self-Help?

A: Self-Help is a community development financial institution (CDFI), and is one of the largest CDFIs in the United States. Since its founding in 1980, Self-Help has provided \$4.5 billion in financing to 45,000 homeowners, small business owners, and other nonprofits nationwide. Headquartered in Durham, Self-Help operates branch offices in seven North Carolina cities, as well as one office in Washington, D.C., that conduct mortgage and small business lending. Self-Help also operates three full-service credit unions in eastern North Carolina to provide consumer loan products and services to mostly rural manufacturing communities.

Q: What is Self-Help's mission?

A: Self-Help's mission is to create and protect ownership and economic opportunity for minorities, women, rural residents, and low-wealth families and communities.

Q: Is Self-Help a bank?

A: Self-Help is not a bank. Self-Help is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community development financial institution that includes a credit union. Self-Help Credit Union raises market-rate deposits from members to make commercial and home loans to members. Its members include nonprofit and religious organizations and other socially responsible individuals and institutions.

Q: What is available at Self-Help?

A: Self-Help offers deposit accounts and small business and mortgage lending services through Self-Help Credit Union. Self-Help also offers commercial and residential real estate development through its community development corporation. Deposit accounts include savings, money market, CD, and individual retirement accounts. Self-Help's lending includes loans for small business development and home purchases. Self-Help's community development corporation builds and sells affordable housing to first-time homebuyers and develops and leases commercial property to encourage downtown revitalization in cities across North Carolina.

(from Self-Help, "Frequently Asked Questions," www.self-help.org/about-us/frequently-asked-questions)

▪ CONTACTS AND OTHER RESOURCES ▪

- ✦ www.nccouncilofchurches.org/areasofwork/committees/economic_justice/economic_justice.html – The *North Carolina Council of Churches* seeks to raise awareness about economic injustice in North Carolina and needed changes through education--guidebooks, fact sheets, workshops and events; increasing the progressive faith presence for equity in our state; uniting people of faith and grassroots groups for advocacy to achieve specific economic justice policies in North Carolina.
- ✦ www.sabbatheconomics.org – The *Sabbath Economics Collaborative* is a new national collaborative network that seeks to facilitate cooperation among faith-based people and organizations committed to economic justice and to serve as a resource to congregations and movements involved in the struggle for sustainable economics and poverty reduction.
- ✦ www.bcm-net.org – *Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries (BCM)* is an ecumenical experiment in discipleship and mutual aid. BCM is an organizational vehicle that promotes gospel practices of mutual aid, reconciliation, Sabbath economics, nonviolence, and social justice. Its umbrella structure facilitates capacity-building among people of faith committed to the work of peace and justice organizing, church renewal, and holistic discipleship.

- ✦ www.belovedcommunitycenter.org – The *Beloved Community Center of Greensboro, Inc.* (BCC) fosters a spirit of community based on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of a “Beloved Community.” BCC works toward social and economic relations that affirm and realize the equality, dignity, worth, and potential of every person. One of Dr. King's dreams was a partnership between faith organizations, the community, working people, and organized labor.
- ✦ www.jubilee4justice.org/workbook4.pdf – *Jubilee Workbook IV*. Ross and Gloria Kinsler, the authors of *The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life: An Invitation to Personal, Ecclesial, and Social Transformation*, developed worksheets to facilitate individual and group reflection and action in the area of economic justice. The worksheets are organized under three very general headings: today’s world, biblical faith, and responsible discipleship. Jubilee spirituality requires critical thinking in all three dimensions. These materials may be reproduced or published with credit to the authors.
- ✦ www.sojo.net – *Sojourners* magazine has published two key articles on Sabbath economics written by Ched Myers-- “God Speed the Year of Jubilee! The biblical vision of Sabbath economics” in *Sojourners*, May-June 1998, found at www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj9805&article=980520 and “Jesus' New Economy of Grace. The biblical vision of Sabbath economics” in *Sojourners*, July-August 1998, found at www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj9807&article=980724.
- ✦ www.enej.org – The 1988 Episcopal General Convention committed the Church to a ministry of economic justice, encouraging investment in community-based economic programs. Formed in 1996, the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice serves to strengthen and support local economic justice ministries and community development projects, including loan funds, credit unions, worker-owned businesses, and housing cooperatives.
- ✦ www.pcusa.org/enough – *Enough for Everyone* is a series of partnerships between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and other local and international organizations designed to engage Christians on four main topics: fair trade, sweatshops, debt and credit, and energy efficiency. Their resources offer practical ways for churches to help disentangle themselves from the grasp of over-consumption and materialism.
- ✦ www.presbyterian.ca/sabbath/resources/joiningthedance-weekthree.pdf – *Joining the Dance* is a seven-day curriculum on Sabbath and Economics developed by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, including discussions on: theology of ecology, biblical economics, abundance, sharing, economic justice, social justice, and unconventional economics.
- ✦ www.ncjustice.org – The *North Carolina Justice Center* is North Carolina’s leading private, nonprofit anti-poverty organization. Its mission is to reduce and eliminate poverty in North Carolina by helping to ensure that every North Carolina household gains access to the resources, services, and fair treatment that it needs in order to enjoy economic security.
- ✦ www.newmonasticism.com – *New Monasticism* is an emerging nationwide movement to reclaim the Church’s historic emphases on community life and the pursuit of justice. Central in this paradigm is the renunciation of our society’s rampant materialism and greed. Sustainability, generous sharing and open hospitality are the core values espoused by New Monasticism.
- ✦ www.ministryofmoney.org – *Ministry of Money* helps people deepen their faith and explore their relationship to money from biblical, psychological, and sociological perspectives. The national organization publishes a newsletter, offers weekend retreats, and leads trips to developing nations.

KEY FACTS

- ❑ Between 2000 and 2004, North Carolina experienced a sharp drop in median household income, a steady rise in the poverty rate, and a jump in the share of uninsured residents.¹
- ❑ Across the country, wealth inequality is vast and growing. The richest one percent of wealth holders had 125 times the wealth of the typical household in 1962. By 2004, they had 190 times as much or \$14.8 million in wealth per household for the upper one percent compared to just \$82,000 for the household in the middle fifth of wealth.²
- ❑ Compared to the full-employment job market of the latter 1990s, the weaker post-2000 labor market has reversed significant progress in racial income gaps. In 1995, the median income of African-American families was 60.9 percent of that of white families. By 2000, the ratio was 63.5 percent, the highest level on record, going back to 1947. In 2004, however, the ratio dropped to 62 percent. This finding suggests that unless the very favorable labor market conditions of the latter 1990s return and are maintained, racial income gaps are likely to widen further.³

- ❑ Based on the federal poverty level, in 2003, 1.2 million North Carolinians – 15.7 percent of the state’s population – lived in poverty. In 2003, 13 percent of whites, 32 percent of blacks, and 38 percent of Hispanics were poor. Additionally, one out of every five North Carolina children lived in poverty.⁴
- ❑ Many consider the federal poverty level an inadequate measure of basic living costs. If one applies the more true-to-reality measure of basic living costs – the living income standard – the percentage of individuals and families in poverty increases significantly, with half of all North Carolina families with children (over 500,000 families) earning too little to meet their basic expenses.⁵
- ❑ The NC Council of Churches joined in the “Let Justice Roll – Faith and Community Voices Against Poverty” campaign -- a nonpartisan coalition of ninety faith and community organizations advocating for fair wages and economic justice. The coalition was instrumental in securing the passage of a bill that raises the state’s minimum wage. In May 2007, the U.S. Congress increased the federal minimum wage by \$2.10 per hour, with the increase to take place in three increments: from \$5.15 to \$5.85 in the summer of 2007; \$6.55 in the summer of 2008; and \$7.25 in the summer of 2009.⁶

Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries’ “Sabbath Economics Household Covenant”

What is “Sabbath economics?” According to Ched Myers, who coined the phrase, “At its root, Sabbath observance is about gift and limits: the grace of receiving that which the Creator gives, and the responsibility not to take too much, nor to mistake the gift for a possession. The economic implications of this tradition as it is articulated in the Bible can be summarized in three axioms:

1. The world as created by God is abundant, with enough for everyone - provided that human communities restrain their appetites and live within limits;
2. Disparities in wealth and power are not “natural” but the result of human sin and must be mitigated within the community of faith through the regular practice of redistribution;
3. The prophetic message calls people to the practice of such redistribution and is thus characterized as “good news” to the poor (Ched Myers, *“The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics,”* Washington, DC: Church of the Saviour, 2002).

Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries (BCM) has developed a Sevenfold Covenant to help those who care about economic justice along the path of economic discipleship. BCM suggests that individuals and families take steps in seven areas to examine and assess how they can implement practices of justice, sharing, and sustainability. Ask yourself the following questions:

Surplus capital (savings, investments, property value, etc.): What steps can I take to make more of my capital available for community development or social change work, or if I have no investment capital, to support social investing?

Negative capital (debt): What steps can I take to lower my household debt level (mortgage, car notes, credit cards, student loans, debt-to-savings ratio), or if I have no debt, to support advocacy around debt justice issues?

Giving: What steps can I take to gift strategically in ways that build social relations?

Environment: What steps can I take to make my household/lifestyle significantly “greener?”

Consumption: What steps can I take to adopt more sustainable/stewarding consumption patterns?

Solidarity: What steps can I take to build meaningful relationships with those who are marginalized?

Sabbath/Work: What steps can I take toward ensuring more adequate rest, reflection, and renewal?

¹ www.ncjustice.org/media/library/660_ncfacts2005.pdf.

² *Economic Policy Institute*, “Economic Snapshots: Wealth Inequality is Vast and Growing,” www.epi.org/content.cfm/webfeatures_snapshots_20060823.

³ *Economic Policy Institute*, “Economic Snapshots: Weaker Job Market Re-Opens Racial Income Gap,”

www.epi.org/content.cfm/webfeatures_snapshots_20060705

⁴ www.ncjustice.org/media/library/660_ncfacts2005.pdf.

⁵ *NC Justice Center*, John Quintero and Elizabeth Jordan, “Failing Jobs, Falling Wages: The 2005 NC Living Income Standard,” www.ncjustice.org/media/library/551_livingincome2005.pdf, pp. 1-2

⁶ Let Justice Roll, “Over 1,000 Faith Leaders Urge Congress to Raise Minimum Wage,” www.letjusticeroll.org/pressroom/ljrpressrelease-1-8-07.html;

Labor Law Center, “Federal Minimum Wage Increase for 2007,”

www.laborlawcenter.com/federal-minimum-wage.asp?gclid=CJTpiaXnhI0CFQqfgAodx0LQig