

Southeast Working-Class Task Force May/June 2018 Newsletter

What Jesus said about poverty

The connection between poverty and race in Indianapolis continues to the glaring as noted in a recent report by Institute for Working Families, “Racial wealth inequity is a deeply entrenched problem that remains poorly addressed by conventional public policy and poorly served by many of the mainstream narratives around it. Inequalities that should be and could be dismantled are thus reinforced.” <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-Race-and-Poverty-in-Marion-County.pdf>

But, aren't we wasting our time worrying about poverty when according to the Bible, the poor will always be with us? Not so says Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis in her book, *Always with Us?: What Jesus Really Said about the Poor*.

Jesus words "the poor you will always have with you" (*Matthew 26:11*) are regularly used to suggest that ending poverty is impossible, that poverty is a result of moral failures, and that the poor themselves have no role in changing their situation. Rev. Theoharis examines both the biblical text and the lived reality of the poor to show how that passage is taken out of context, distorted, and politicized to justify theories about the inevitability of inequality.

She makes a strong theological call for ending of systemic poverty

Theoharis reinterprets "the poor you will always have with you" to show that it is actually one of the strongest biblical mandates to end poverty. She documents stories of poor people themselves organizing to improve their lot and illuminates the implications for the church. Poverty is not inevitable, Theoharis argues. It is a systemic sin, and all Christians have a responsibility to partner with the poor to end poverty once and for all.

Rev. Theoharis calls for a New Morality

- A vision of human worth and dignity based on global human rights
- Places justice over charity
- Views poverty is immoral and a sin rather than seeing poor people as immoral and sinners

Hear Liz on this podcast <http://loveinadangeroustime.net/the-poor-will-always-be-with-us-what-jesus-really-said-about-the-poor-a-talk-with-rev-dr-liz-theoharis-ldto88/>

Dr. Theoharis is the co-director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice, which is a part of Union Theological Seminary in New York

This month's newsletter is a compilation of ideas and quotes from a review of *Always with us?* <https://www.amazon.com/Always-Us-Really-Prophetic-Christianity/dp/0802875025> and from Ch. 11, "Teach As We Fight, Learn As We Lead: Lessons in the Pedagogy and the Poverty Initiative Model" from *The Pedagogy of the Poor* by Willie Baptist

The SEW-CTF newsletter is edited by task force Chair John Harris Loflin (john.loflin@seindy.org). The task force meets the 3rd Wed. of the month at 6:30 on the 2nd floor at 901 Shelby St.