**Loving the Poor and Needy**

**The Word**

Read together Isaiah 58:1-11

**The Big Idea**

God has a compassionate heart for the vulnerable and powerless, and he calls his people to reflect his heart by engaging in compassionate action on their behalf. As Christ followers, we are to find ways to regularly engage with and love and serve those who are poor and needy.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What from Sunday’s message was new for you or particularly meaningful to you?

2. Consider the quote given during Sunday’s message: “I have come to see that the great tragedy of the church is not that rich Christians do not care about the poor but that rich Christians do not know the poor.” How does that quote square with your own life experience?

3. Share about a meaningful relationship you’ve had with someone who you would genuinely identify as poor and needy according to Scripture (see Point II D below for a helpful description of “poor and needy”). What were the challenges you experienced in that relationship, and what were the blessings you experienced in that relationship?

4. Poverty and need take many forms in today’s society. Is there a particular population you feel especially called to at this time (for example, the homeless, orphans, widows, the elderly, immigrants, people with disabilities, etc.)?

5. Is there a particular step you plan to take as a result of this conversation? If so, how can the group be praying for you in that?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. God’s heart for the poor

A. God’s heart for the poor as seen in the Psalms (see Psalm 113:5-8, 68:4-6, 146:6-9)

B. Jesus’s heart for the poor as seen in the gospels (see Luke 4:18-19, 7:22)

C. In both Old and New Testament, we see a God and Savior who is mighty and powerful and who loves to exercise that power on behalf of the powerless and vulnerable.

D. By poor and needy, Scripture refers to those who are particularly vulnerable and powerless in society; those who are easily taken advantage of and/or easily overlooked by the rest of society.

II. The call of the church to follow in the way of Jesus to love and care for the poor

A. Compassionate care for the vulnerable is at the heart of our faith (see James 1:27)

B. God is not interested in religious activity that is divorced from compassionate care and justice for the vulnerable (see Isaiah 58:1-11)

C. The problem with much of church today is that we are not regularly exposed to real poverty and need. But the call to care for the poor and needy is very clear in Scripture, so for those of us who live lives isolated from such people, that means we need to work harder and be more intentional to be in relationship with them.

III. Lead with Relationship

A. This is ultimately not about joining a program or ministry (though it often starts there), but it is ultimately about forming real relationships of mutual love and care.

B. If we engage with people like this, our lives will get messier

C. If we engage with people like this, our lives will be enriched

1. We will be reminded of the gospel (See 2 Corinthians 8:9)

2. The faith of these people will humble us and teach us what it means to truly trust God with our lives (See James 2:5)