

Don't Turn Jesus Away

✖ I was in New York City years ago shopping with my sister, when a young man stopped me on the sidewalk and asked me for a handout. He was wearing designer everything, so I didn't give him a dime. In this case, it was easy for me to ignore a poor person. After all, this man wasn't poor—he was a con!

People who try to take advantage of our kindness have approached many of us. Street peddlers or drug addicts who trick people out of money so they can buy drugs or liquor make it difficult for the truly destitute who are forced to live on the streets.

Since we don't want to decide who's really poor and who isn't, we tend to look the other way. It's easier to just ignore them.

Rewind this story 2,000 years and something sounds familiar.

There was an expectant mom who arrived in an unfamiliar city and was told there were no motel rooms or boarding houses available. Though she was about to have a baby, she and her husband were homeless.

Nobody recognized her need, so she was forced to give birth in a barn. Her baby's name was Jesus. He became poor so we could have the priceless gift of eternal life (see 2 Cor. 8:9).

Do you recognize the poor around you? This holiday season many of us will shop until we drop and on the way out the door, we'll probably throw some loose change into the Salvation Army kettle to help others. Or possibly some of us will volunteer to feed the hungry during a church outreach.

But helping the poor needs to become more of a priority for all who follow Jesus. So much of His ministry was directed to the poor. Why, then, do so few churches in the U.S. support

ministries that meet the physical needs of underprivileged people?

God's Word instructs us to feed the hungry, visit prisoners, care for orphans and widows, and give clothes to those who don't have any. So when we don't make room for these people in our hearts, we are doing what the innkeeper did to Mary and Joseph when they sought a room in Bethlehem. We are turning Jesus away—again.

When you see someone truly in need, allow Jesus to break your heart, so you can feel what He feels for the woman who has to live in a cardboard box, the many who must sleep on bench or the child who rarely eats a healthful meal.

This Christmas—and all through the year—let's make room in our hearts for the poor.