

Christians, Money and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's

*The Cost of Discipleship*¹

Addendum

1. Jesus warns in Mt 7:21-23,

‘Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord”, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?” Then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.”

John Stott said of this passage,

We need to consider, ourselves, and get [the congregations we serve] to consider that the Bible is a dangerous book to read, and the Church is a dangerous society to join. Because in reading the Bible we hear the words of Christ and in joining the church we profess faith in Christ. And therefore if you read the Bible and join the Church, you belong to the company described by Jesus as hearing his teaching and calling him ‘Lord.’ Now it’s a great thing to belong to the visible Church and to read the Bible and to be a professing Christian believer, to have been baptized, etc., etc. But it places upon all of us the exceedingly solemn responsibility to express what we know and what we say in a life of practical Christian obedience.²

Sider argues persuasively that we of the American middle class are indeed rich. How can we, as individuals or as a small group, help the congregation see itself in this light, that we might all heed the warnings of Scripture? Is there anything Council could do to raise awareness of this issue?

2. In a different context, James 5:1 warns: “Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you.” The “rich” in this passage are identified four ways: they are those who
- a. lay up “treasures for the last days” (5:3)
 - b. don’t pay their laborers a fair wage (5:4)
 - c. live “on the earth in luxury and pleasure”, fattening their “hearts on the day of slaughter”; and
 - d. “condemned and murdered the righteous one” (5:6)

Of v. 6 the *New Bible Commentary* says, “He is probably thinking of lawsuits in which the rich took away the wages or land of the poor. Left without adequate resources, the poor Christians starved or, weakened by poor food, died of diseases.”

Are any of these four are true of us? We are certainly Sider’s “rich.” Are we James’ “rich”?

¹ Page numbers refer to the revised paperback edition (Collier: New York), 1963.

² From his lecture “The Christian’s Relationships II”, in his lecture series at Trinity Divinity School on the Sermon on the Mount.