

## Visiting Widows

James 1:27a

12/12/1999

James, chapter 1. The book of James, the first chapter. We've been studying together as a section, James chapter 1, verses 18 through 27. And the focus of James's exhortation *to* us in this section has to do with the way we receive, respond, and interact with the word of God. In verse 18, we are told that the word of God was the instrument through which the new birth was accomplished. Of His own will, He begot us, *by* the word of truth. Therefore, we are told, we should be swift to hear its *teachings*. We should be slow to *speak*, until we have truly learned the meaning and application of those teachings. And we should be slow to wrath regarding *controversy over* those teachings.

And so to that end, we must properly conduct ourselves when the word of God is preached *to* us. We are to engage in personal preparation before the preaching of the word by putting away any sin and rebellion that may be in our hearts. We are to engage in active participation *during* the teaching of the word by receiving it with an active, attentive, and undistracted *mind*, so that it might be understood, remembered, and reflected upon. We are to engage in practical implementation *after* the preaching of the word by striving to put into practice what we have been taught in our relationship with God, and our relationship with others, and in our relationship with ourselves.

Now it is to this latter responsibility of practically implementing the Scriptures after we hear them preached that James provides further application. Having told us that we must be *doers* of the word and not hearers only, he now gives us three specific examples of how we can be doers of the word. And we find these in verses 26 and 27.

We looked at the first of these last Sunday night, and saw that a *doer* of the word—one who is a true Christian, one who practices *true* religion—is one who bridles, or who controls, his *tongue*. The control of the tongue, so that corrupt speech is restrained and *good* speech is expressed, is an infallible mark of a converted heart. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man, a saved man, out of the *good* treasure of his heart brings forth that which is *good*. And an evil man, an unsaved man, out of the *evil* treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil. And so one who is a doer of the word—one who is therefore saved, one who practices true religion—is one who both *can* and *does* control his speech, so that by his words his claim to salvation is vindicated.

And so, after having considered together, then, verse 26 last Lord's Day, we turn now this evening to the second example James gives us as to how we can be *doers* of the word. Having seen last Lord's Day that true believers are those who *control* their tongues, in the second place, this evening we want to consider together that true believers are those who have compassion on the needy. *True* believers are those who have compassion on the needy.

Now having in verse 26 given us a negative example of *false* religion exemplified by one who *fails* to control his tongue, James now provides a *positive* example of *true* religion, exemplified by one who shows *compassion* upon the *needy*. Notice if you will verse 27. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.”

You see, what really matters is not that we or others think that our religion is true religion, but rather that *God* views it as such. We must always have a consciousness that our religion is being lived out before the eye of God. That’s what he says here, “Pure religion and undefiled before *God* and the Father is this.” And so we must always have consciousness that our religion is being lived out before the eye of God, and that He alone is the true judge as to what *constitutes* true proof of true saving faith.

So before God, that is, in the eyes of God, true religion consists, in part, in having compassion upon the needy. Now this is not the totality of true religion. We know there are many other things that constitute various facets of true religion. But one of those facets, which is of indispensable necessity, is that this person gives himself in compassion to the needs of those who are in a state of affliction.

So in the first place then this evening, let us consider together that God Himself has an active compassion towards the fatherless and the widow. God Himself has an active compassion towards the fatherless and the widow.

Now the fatherless and the widow are not the only needy people that exist, and they are not the *only* ones upon whom we are to have *compassion*. The Bible also speaks of the sick, it speaks of the poor, it speaks of the oppressed, and many other categories of needy people. And yet, when we see God’s attitude towards the widow and towards the fatherless, we see *in* that attitude His disposition towards all who fall into the category of needy people. So we are not by this verse liberated from having to visit and care for *other* types of afflicted people, but rather what we have here is an example of one category of afflicted people, indicating to us what our responsibility is to *all* categories of afflicted people.

Now our text says that the fatherless and widows are in a state of affliction. And what this means is that they are in a state of anguish, a state of trouble, and a state of *burden*. Now it is often the case that the widow and the fatherless are of the same *family*. Having lost the head of the home through death, the wife *and* the children are both bereft of their leader. The head of the home has died. The wife and the children are without either husband or father. And this indeed is a state of affliction. They are without a protector, a provider, a leader, a lover, or an example. And to be without a husband or a father is a state of infliction *indeed*.

Now God has a great care and concern for the widow and the orphan, and He has committed Himself to care for the widow and the orphan in the most clear and forceful terms possible. For example, God says in Psalm 68 and verse 5, “A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.”

Now in His providence, God may *take* a husband and a father from a family, but He does not *do* so without replacing it with something *better*. God may take a husband and a father, but He replaces him with Himself. And He says that *He* steps into that position, and *He* becomes the father to the fatherless and the judge of the widow, and He takes upon Himself the role of that man that He in His providence has removed from that home. God becomes the father of the children. He becomes the protector of the widow, and commits Himself to fill in the gap left by the death of the head of the home with His *own* person. He will do for the widow and the fatherless all that the father *would* have done had the father been there.

Notice if you will, first of all, His *commitment* to their *protection*—His *commitment* to their *protection*. In Exodus chapter 22, verses 22 through 24, God says in His law, “Ye shall *not afflict* any *widow*, or *fatherless child*. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at *all* unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.” Now that is incredibly strong language. I don’t *ever* want to be the object of a widow’s cries to God for justice against me. God does not tolerate *anyone* abusing the widow or the fatherless. And if they abuse them in *any way*, and they cry *at all* to Him, He says, Surely I *will* hear them.

Now, you husbands that are here, if someone abused your wife or your child in any way, and they came to you and said, Hey, thus and such, would you do nothing about it? Ha! You would be moved to jump right on it, wouldn’t you? Well how much more is God moved to protect those that He has charged Himself with the care of? Since the widow and the fatherless have *no man* as their head to appeal to for justice and protection, God Himself takes that role and *woe* be to the person who afflicts *one* of God’s widows or one of God’s fatherless children.

Jesus was *furious* with those who abused widows. In Luke chapter 20, verses 46 through 47, He says, “Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows’ houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.”

That is, their damnation will be *greater* than that of others, because they devoured widows’ houses; that is, they took economic advantage of those who were without husbands. And since, you see, widows are helpless and powerless, humanly speaking, they are an easy target for the more powerful to take advantage of. And God recognizes this, and He declares He will not tolerate it.

In Deuteronomy chapter 10, verses 17 through 18, it says, “For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.” And so the Lord is a great, mighty, awesome, and terrible God, and when He moves to execute judgment on behalf of the fatherless and the widow, *woe* be to the object of that judgment. If you know of a widow or a fatherless person, you treat them with a special, tender care, lest they cry at all to God against you and He hear them and He be moved against you.

Secondly, notice not only His commitment to their protection, but also His compassion on their needs—His compassion on their needs. Now God is a God who has charged Himself not only with *protecting* widows, but also with *providing* for widows. And as we saw in our passage in Deuteronomy, verse 18, He says He gives to them food and clothing. But notice if you will the extended narrative of His care for the needs of the widow at Zarephath and her son in First Kings chapter 17. Now Ahab was the ruler and Jezebel at this time in Israel, and as an act of judgment upon them, and in effort to bring them to repentance, God through Elijah sent three years of drought to the land, which of course caused a great famine.

And so it says in First Kings chapter 17, “And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

“And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a *widow* woman there to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

“And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.”

And so God sent Elijah to this woman so that the woman could take care of him, but really, he was taking care of her, was he not? And then she falls into a state of distress. Notice verse 17: “And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the *widow* with whom I *sojourn*, by slaying her *son*? And he stretched himself upon the child three

times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.” He was obviously dead if his soul was out of him.

“And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.” And so this is a marvelous story of how God looked upon all of the *many people* of the land, and shows a *widow* woman to be the one that He sustains supernaturally and to be the one whose son that He raised from the dead.

But we see this taking place, not only in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament as well. Jesus had compassion upon *another* widow, the widow of Nain, and He raised *her* son. In Luke, chapter 7, verses 11 through 15, it says, “And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the *only son* of his mother, and *she* was a *widow*: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”

Isn't that an incredible story? I mean, that just tugs my heart every time I read that—to think that here's this woman, she's lost her husband, and now she's lost her only son, and she's cast upon the world, helpless and hopeless. And Jesus looks at her, and He just can't stand it. And He goes over there, and He has compassion on the woman, and He gives her back her son.

And so we see that—and these are just but two of many examples of the Scripture where God had compassion on the needs of widows, and met those needs through an *unusual* extension of His power and grace and mercy, and particularly selected them out as objects of His power, or the objects of the *exercise* of His power, in meeting their needs.

Thirdly, notice His endorsement and recognition of their *smallest* service to Himself—His endorsement and recognition of their smallest service to Himself. He was sitting in the temple and He was watching, in Luke, chapter 21. All the rich Pharisees come and dump all their big gobs of money into the temple treasury. And it says in Luke, chapter 21 and verse 2, “And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.” Well, that's like about two pennies. “And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.” It's true that widows and those who are poor and oppressed and afflicted and in difficult circumstances can't do much for the Lord. But whatever little thing they do, God takes note of it, and God *values* it, and God recognizes it as a service to Himself, and He is pleased with it.

And so the weak and the destitute and the powerless need never fear that what little they do for the Lord is ever forgotten of the Lord. It is noted, and in fact oftentimes given more credit than the *great* things that the great and the wealthy and the powerful ever do.

Notice fourthly, His commitment to their stability and their prosperity—His commitment to their stability and their prosperity. In Proverbs, chapter 15—Proverbs, chapter 15 and verse 25, it says, “The Lord will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.” That is, God is going to build a secure fence around the widow. He will establish her border so that none can transgress *upon* that and destroy her.

In Psalm 146 and in verse 9, it says, “The Lord preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.” And so they will be delivered from distress. He will relieve them; that is, He will show them mercy. And so we see that God Himself has a great care and concern for the orphan and for the widow.

Now, if we are to be like God, and if we are to have the attitudes of God, which is what *true* religion is all about—it’s being imitators of God—, then we will have the *same* attitude and conduct towards the widow and the fatherless that God *Himself* has towards them. True religion is to be like God. Does God bridle His tongue so He doesn’t say corrupt things? Certainly He does. Does God have compassion upon the widow and the orphan? Certainly He does. And so if God Himself has an active compassion for the fatherless and the widows, then *certainly* His people should as well.

And that brings us to our second point this evening. Having seen that God Himself has an active compassion for the fatherless and the widows, notice secondly that God *exercises* His compassion and care for the widow and the fatherless *through* His people. God exercises His compassion and care for the widow and fatherless *through His people*.

Now we’ve already seen this in the person of Elijah in his care for the widow in Nain. But notice, if you will, our own text here in James, chapter 1 in verse 27, when it says, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.” In other words, James is telling us that *we* are to be the instruments through which God ministers to the widow and the fatherless. *We* are to do the visiting of the widow and the fatherless in their affliction.

Now the word “visit” here means far more than to just drop by for a chat once in a while. While it certainly means that, more than that, it means to look upon for the purpose of extending relief. It means to look upon for the purpose of extending relief. In other words, when you go and *visit* these people, the purpose is to see, Are there any needs that are here that I can meet in order to relieve any distress that may be present? God relieves the widow and the fatherless by means of His *own* people extending relief *to* them. Personal exertion and personal initiative is therefore required of us.

Now notice if you will the numerous commands given to people regarding the duty they have to exercise care for the widow and the fatherless, and thus be instruments of God, in accomplishing His care for them. We have a number of commands in the Old Testament, and we have a number in the New Testament.

First of all, consider the commands in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy, chapter 14, verses 28 through 29, God says this: “At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.”

Now without going into all the details of the tithing system of the Old Covenant, suffice it to say that one of the purposes of the tithe was to provide for the needs of the fatherless and the widow. And so people were to give of their *money* to meet the needs of those who were incapable of earning it on their own because of the difficulty that they were in.

And then notice, if you will, Deuteronomy 24, verses 19 through 21. In Deuteronomy 24, verses 19 through 21, it says, “When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.”

In other words, not only were people to just flat *give* their money for the maintenance of the fatherless and the widow, they were also to provide the fatherless and the widow with the *means* of providing for *themselves*. That is, in this situation, they weren't told, You've got to gather up your stuff and take it to their *house*. God expects the fatherless and the widow to *do* something for *themselves*, namely, go out in the fields and *glean*. You remember Ruth did that for herself and for Naomi. They were both widows. And yet we saw that Boaz was very *kind*, and he told his reapers, you know, Drop a sheaf now and then for this widow woman who follows you in the fields. And don't glean the corners of the field too closely. Just let them go. And so we are to provide them with opportunities for earning income.

And then in Isaiah, chapter 1, verses 16 through 18, God is calling His people to repentance. And He says, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil.” And then He says, “Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

In other words, He says part of doing well is taking up the cause of the fatherless and the widow and standing *up* for them, and standing *with* them in the face of any persecution or difficulties they may be experiencing. So that when you visit them, and you perceive that there is a *need* or an *oppression* of some kind being worked against them, then you take the initiative to take up their cause and to defend them and to relieve them of that distress.

And it was precisely the failure to *do* this that brought God's judgment upon Israel, and that caused Him to say to them in the very next verse, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith

the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” And you see, part of the scarlet sin that they had was not only the evil that they *did* do, but the *good* that they *failed* to do. And part of the good that they failed to do was to judge the fatherless and *plead for* the widow.

And then in Zechariah, chapter 7, verses 8 through 10, it says, “And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.” And so we have another exhortation to stop being oppressive against the widow.

So these, then, are the Old Testament commands. They are clear, they are copious, and they are binding upon the people in terms of the way in which they were to treat one another. But we also, secondly, have commands in the New Testament as well, with reference to the fact that we are to be the instruments through which God expresses His compassion and care and provision for the widow.

Notice if you will, First Timothy, chapter 5, verses 5 through 16. First Timothy 5, verses 5 through 16. Now what we have in this passage is Paul’s directions as to the care of the widows and the responsibility *for* the widows, and the responsibilities *of* the widows, by the way. Verse 5, it says, “Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.”

And so he says here, there are two kinds of widows. He says there are widows who are *trusting* in God, and there are widows who are living in *pleasure*. It is the widows that are trusting in God that we are charged to care for. Now those widows who have children or nephews, children or grandchildren, abiding at home, let them first learn to show piety at home and to requite their *parents*. That is good and acceptable before God. But those widows who are widows *indeed*, and those who are *desolate*, that is, they don’t have any family to care for them, those who trust in God and manifest that trust by their *service* to God with their prayers, these are the widows that are to be cared for.

Now it goes on to say in verse 8, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” In other words, if you have a parent who happens to be a widow, then you have a duty to care for that parent, and if you do not care for that parent, then you are demonstrating yourself to be an unconverted person. If a widow has children, then the children are to show piety at home and to requite their parents, that is, they are to meet their parents’ needs. And so the first line of defense for the widow is her own children and grandchildren.

The second line of defense for the widow, if she does not *have* a family member of any kind—she is *desolate*, she is a widow *indeed*—is for the church then to care for that individual. Now when the church cares for these individuals, they are to do so not to any and every widow that

happens to blow in through the front door, but to those who demonstrate particular character. Verse 9: “Let not a widow be taken into the number,” that is, the number of those the church cares for, “under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man. Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.” That is, she’s a woman of character.

Verse 11, “But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan. If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows *indeed*.”

So the church has the duty to relieve those who are widows *indeed*. But it is not God’s intention that young widows be relieved by the church, but rather that they seek the face of God for a *new* marriage partner. The older widows are not expected to remarry; they are those who are to be relieved by the church, if they have no family members to relieve them.

And so we see an example of this activity and practice in Acts, chapter 6, verses 1 and following, in which the church *did* care for the widows. It says in Acts 6:1, “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.” And the disciples didn’t say, Oh well, what are we doing supporting these widows? Send them out the door, anyway. No, they didn’t do that. In fact, they appointed a special group of men to look *out* for them and to *care* for them. And these were the first deacons that were appointed in the church, “seven men of honest report whom we may appoint over this business.” What business? The business of caring for the widows.

So clearly, based on the example of the church in Acts, chapter 6, and based on the command of the apostle in First Timothy, chapter 5, the church has a duty to care for widows who are widows indeed, while *family* members have the duty to care for the widows that are within their own families.

And so it is clear that God exercises His compassion and care for the widow and the fatherless through His people. And you see, if we are to have true religion and be like God, then we must care about the things God cares about, protect the things God protects, provide for the things God provides for. In short, we must do as He does in relationship to the widow and the fatherless. And indeed, our very *conduct* in this area, our openhandedness, selflessness, and generosity are going to be the *witness* that we, in fact, are saved people on the day of judgment.

When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then He shall sit upon the throne of His glory and before Him shall be gathered all nations. And He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. And then shall the King say to them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; and I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me. And then shall the righteous answer Him saying, Lord, when did we do all of these things to you? And the King shall answer and say to them, Verily, I say to you, inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. [Matt. 25:31-45]

And in what circumstance—in what circumstance is there a *greater* opportunity to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, take in the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and deliver the oppressed than in dealing with widows and the fatherless?

Most folks don't *need* that stuff. You know, I'm grateful—I have plenty of clothes. I don't need any of you to give me any *clothes*. And I've got lots of food. And I've got lots to drink. And I'm *grateful* for that. And I appreciate the way the church supports me. But the point is, is that there's lots of people with lots more needs than *us*. We're all doing pretty *well*. And Jesus says, If you give to those who give to you, what *reward* have you? Don't the Gentiles even do *that*? Go find somebody who can't requite you with anything, and give to them. And there is no better category of people than that—than the widow and the fatherless.

We have some widows in our congregation. They have children. They are protected and provided for, and we're grateful for that, but if they didn't, we'd take care of them. Works of mercy are fitting for those who expect to receive mercy. It says in Matthew 5, and verse 7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall have mercy."

Do you hope on the day of judgment to have mercy from God? Then be among those who show mercy to the widows and to the fatherless, and God will *recognize* in that act a service to Himself that was a mark of a converted heart.

Well let us pray together. Father, thank you so much that you are the God who employs all of your power, might, majesty, and strength for the care of the least and the poorest and those who are the most distressed. Lord, help us then to look out for those who are in those categories and reflect *your* heart towards them. Father, help us to be the vehicle of provision for those who need food and clothing and comfort and companionship and deliverance and nursing.

Father, we are grateful that we have the privilege of serving you in this fashion and being, as it were, your arm to your people. Father, may we treat the godly widow as a church in the way in which you require us. Help us, Lord, to never show a deaf ear and a hardened heart towards those who are in need.

Especially, Father, at this time of year when we think about the marvelous gift you gave to us, oh Father, help us not to shut up our heart of compassion towards others. Lord, open our eyes to needs and our hearts to generosity. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.