

People in Purple

Volume 5

Sermons/Keynotes

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FOREWORD

Every time I revisit the parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8), Jean Kim appears in my mind. I suspect it is the same for many others – maybe Jesus himself. Short in stature and nearing her eightieth birthday, Jean has been pounding on the church’s door for decades, demanding justice for those whom society has forgotten. Wearing her every present purple *End Homelessness* t-shirt, she would be a shoe-in at any audition for the persistent widow role.

When I was coordinating the Presbyterian Hunger Program “Jean is on the phone” always meant I was about to have a long conversation about homelessness and what we needed to be doing about it. And I would most often agree to what she requested. With her sense of urgency and infinite patience, Jean wears down all resistance.

This collection of sermons that she has delivered over 40 years, documents that persistence. In churches large and small, rich and poor, conservative and liberal, Jean has brought a consistent message about the contrast between God’s love for poor and homeless people and our neglect of them. She calls for action – repentance, actually – and she will not go away without a response.

Tell her that there is nothing your church can do – that you are in the wrong neighborhood, that you don’t have much money, that you are all retired – and she will point to her list of “77 Ways (106 now) Churches can Help” from her *End Homelessness Manual*. Dismissing resistance, she says, “If any church says you cannot do any one of the 77, you may go to see a psychiatrist.”

As Jean acknowledges, her message can be “tough,” challenging us to move beyond our comfort zone of writing checks to actually engaging with our homeless neighbors. But she also brings the authenticity of one who has lived a tough life and emerged with deep faith. The frequent sharing of that personal history gains her an audience willing to hear her out.

But tough and demanding are just one side of the story. These sermons are also informative – often sharing statistics about homelessness “right here in River City.” And they are always very practical – hence the *77 ways (106 now)*. Finally, and quite endearing,

these sermons share a sincere appreciation for the efforts that churches are making. At least once we hear her say, “If every church does what you do, we can end homelessness.”

In Volume five, Jean has explored the scriptural foundation of her work on homelessness. In this volume, we see how she has applied that scriptural analysis to build a practical theology of homelessness. Her preaching provides biblically grounded guidance, challenge, and inspiration to both comfortable Presbyterian congregations and communities of homeless people as they gather for worship.

I find the sermons Jean addresses to homeless people to be the most enlightening section of the collection. Many of us who support and encourage the church’s response to the needs of poor and hungry people often preach “about” poverty and homelessness. It takes a different skill set, a different sensitivity, and a fuller grasp of the gospel, to preach good news “to” the homeless.

Over forty years ago, while taking part in the Urban Institute’s “Urban Plunge” in Chicago, I sought respite for the night at Pacific Garden mission. Attendance at worship was a prerequisite for being offered an invitation to go downstairs for a warm meal and a place to sleep. The preacher – presumably like most who preceded and followed him – ended with an invitation to come forward and be “saved.” It wasn’t long before several men made their way to the front to pray with the preacher, while the rest of us headed downstairs to eat. At dinner, the men openly talked about how they took turns answering the altar call. “It’s the only way to get him to stop,” they said, “so we can get down here and eat.”

Jean’s sermons to the homeless are not that kind of sermon. She clearly knows what most of us have found out in our dealings with homeless women and men: a lack of faith in God’s saving grace is not the major issue. Their needs do, however, closely reflect the people whom Jesus met and to whom he demonstrated the good news. Like her savior, Jean addresses these victims of illness, demons and addiction with love and respect. Like Jesus, she often engages them in dialog, treating them like the homelessness “experts” that they are. Reading these sermons, you will often hear echoes of Jesus’ haunting question, “Do you want to be healed.”

I must note that these sermons reflect their context in community. Jean speaks as a pastor to the flock she has gathered. Close, trusting relationships – or, at least, an in-depth “knowing” in the cases where people had built up impenetrable defenses – sustain an authenticity far beyond that of the visiting evangelist. The invitation to make changes always comes with the implicit assurance that “we will be here to fight the battle with you.”

These sermons, then, cannot be easily picked up and preached by those of us who occasionally drop into the lives of our homeless neighbors. They do, however, give us a clearer understanding of what is really “good news” to those who struggle with homelessness. This collection belongs on every preacher’s bookshelf. Not because they are sermons to be poached, but because they are ones to be pondered. They raise important questions:

- Is it too bold to speak about “ending” hunger and poverty, or is a lack of faith to speak otherwise?
- Do our sermons ask enough of our listeners? Should we be more persistent in expectation of a response?
- Is the gospel that we proclaim truly “good news to the poor?” Would poor and homeless people hear that way?
- What authentic words of assurance and hope would I share if called on to speak at the funeral of a homeless neighbor?

When Jesus describes the dividing of the sheep and goats at the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 25), we hear him affirming the ones who took “the homeless poor into your homes.” In our security conscious world, that always sounds like a very high bar to clear. Perhaps it is, but I know a woman who can tell you about 106 ways that you can take them into your church, and that’s a good start. These are her sermons; we can all learn from them.

Rev. Gary Cook
 Former Director of the Presbyterian Hunger Program,
 Presbyterian Church (USA).
 Retired Director of Church Relations for Bread for the World,
 Washington DC.

FOREWORD

Passion with Grace.

That's what the following pages in this book by Jean Kim are about.

That's right. Passion with grace. From the time Jean Kim and her family left North Korea to Korean War over a half century ago, becoming homeless in the process, she has become an advocate for the homeless and done it with both passion and grace.

As Jean's pastor for most of those twenty-five years, which continues through my retirement, I have watched this passionate and graceful woman lift the needs of homeless people in this country to a national concern. Her broad experience as a mental health worker in St. Louis and in Seattle, a Campus Minister with international students at the University of Washington, a street Minister at night for the homeless in Seattle – all fed into her founding the Church of Mary Magdalene in Seattle which has become a model for many such institutions for homeless women across the country.

These sermons which you will be reading are really the heart and soul of Jean Kim's life. She also speaks of the heart of God and from the heart of the homeless. They, and her advocacy work in many other ways, are why the national Presbyterian Church in this country has adopted a broad action-oriented project for the disinherited.

This volume might especially be a good resource for preachers who struggle with what to preach on themes related to poverty and homelessness in particular both in an ordinary church as well as the homeless congregation. It is often hard for preachers to be relevant and insightful to people who experience poverty and homelessness, and rarely example sermons are available that are relevant to such a theme. I'll say it again: Passion and Grace.

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PREFACE

Are you a church goer or a person in any religion? How many sermons have you heard from the pulpit on poverty/homelessness in the United States? I bet only a few or maybe none. Volume 5 contains 55 sermons I have preached. The motivation to write Volume 5 came about this way: Some years ago, I led a preconference on homelessness issue. I asked a certain pastor to preach at our opening worship service. He chose Matthew 25: 35-36, 40 as his sermon text.

³⁵I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. ⁴⁰ Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me). What you did it to the least you did it for me.

He chose a very relevant text to our conference theme on homelessness. But he preached a sermon unrelated to the theme of the conference. He wasn't able to relate the text to the conference theme at all. It shocked me and made me realize not all preachers (including me) can preach on all themes, and that many preachers are not clear on what to preach, especially on the theme of poverty/homelessness perhaps because they have no experience or have a lack of knowledge or resources. This realization motivated me to create a reference book of sermons for those who want to see some sermon examples in relation to poverty and homelessness topics, or want some ideas on what to preach. Volume 5 contains 23 sermons I preached to nearly 30 different Christian churches/conferences in 20 different states, and 32 sermons preached to homeless congregations in Seattle – for special occasions such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Thanksgiving, Mother' Day or Father's Day, World Communion Sunday, Black History Month, Anniversary and at the funeral service of homeless persons. My sermons are not the best sermons by any means but I dare to share them with those who want to see some samples. My audiences mainly have been two groups – one is a general Christian Church and the other is a congregation of homeless people. What do I preach to them? To the former, I am compelled to remind them of the

compassionate heart of God and Jesus Christ for the poor/homeless and motivate the congregation to follow the model of Jesus for the homeless. Of course, I compliment them for what they are already doing for the poor/homeless. But then, I bring them to the reality of homelessness in their own town or city and challenge them to move one step beyond toward ending homelessness. To the latter, I attempt to introduce Jesus in the Bible who was homeless, a street minister, healer and a friend for the most downtrodden, sick, alienated, homeless outcasts in his days, in order that my homeless audience may feel closer to this Jesus and find hope in him and be motivated to get up from their destructive life style and behavior, and walk toward self-sufficient life as healthy responsible citizens. Faith is very powerful to do this! What is important when I preach? First of all, a preacher must understand his/her audience, must be clear about the purpose of his/her sermon, the central theme of the Bible text a preacher chooses, and the occasion she/he is preaching at and able to apply biblical meaning to the occasion/reality. When I am invited to preach I always check out the theme of the occasion and audience so that I can preach a relevant sermon. I do an in-depth study of the sermon text (Bible), its spiritual as well as the social, political, economic and cultural context of the text and the people to whom it was written. Then I apply it to the spiritual, social, economic, political and cultural contexts in which we all live in and in which the poor/homeless brothers, sisters and children struggle to survive. My sermons have much room for improvement, so I keep working hard to preach better sermons each time.

In my sermon to a general Christian church, I do not preach a sermon that promises a pie in the sky or introduce Jesus who blesses us with permanent and once-for-all tickets to heaven. Instead, I try to disclose the real Jesus who was never complacent but was poor, emptying of self, giving himself, dying and rising, and who compels us to get up, go and meet him in the homeless. I do hope congregations become able to see Jesus in the face of the homeless and are motivated to serve them whom Jesus identifies with and vice versa. I hope congregations awaken from their one-sided, personal, other-worldly, and spiritually focused Jesus in heaven to earthly Jesus who lived, served, suffered and died for others; and who is still

walking with those in a deep valley of dead bones, where he keeps on loving, reviving and serving the homeless. I hope to awaken many congregations that are sleeping in their material complacency and apathy, to the dire needs of our homeless neighbors and cease to blame the poor as responsible for their poverty and homelessness. I dare hope congregation's hardened hearts may be melted by God's and Jesus' deep compassion and be motivated to open rooms in their hearts and churches to welcome the homeless.

In my sermon to the homeless I try to bring them closer to Jesus by introducing him who was poor, despised and alienated in his time. Jesus, who lived among the poor and the sick, who served them and died with them on a cruel cross. I try to bring this Jesus to their life hoping the homeless will know they are not alone because Jesus who knows all about poverty and homelessness is with them. In doing so, that they may find hope in him and be motivated to get up and walk toward healing and restoration. Instead of using traditional church language, "believe in Jesus and be saved," I try to bring them closer to Jesus, and Jesus closer to them so they can come into his life, be transformed and find their permanent home in him. I hope my sermon will be of comfort and hope-giving as well as a challenge to the homeless to get up and walk because Jesus is walking with them.

Through my sermons to Christian churches or to the homeless, I dare hope to help the haves and have-nots to find the right Jesus: Instead of focusing only on spiritual Jesus the homeless find it hard to relate to and the haves find it hard to convince the homeless, I bring the socio-economic and political aspect of Jesus so haves and have-nots both can relate to him rather realistically.

In short, my approach in preaching is an attempt to bring a holistic salvation to the haves by challenging them to find the right Jesus, "Our Lord and Savior," who grieves and lament to see so many homeless in our midst. He would disturb our conscience so that we can be compassionate to the needy; to have-nots by meeting their spiritual as well as physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs. Also by finding the right Jesus, "Lord and Savior" who identifies with the homeless

plights and wants to lift them out of it – to salvation from sickness unto death (homelessness).

I call the mission I am involved with a “healing mission,” – salvation. The whole purpose of the mission as well as my sermon is a sincere attempt to undo the damage done by their families, society, church and themselves. Such profound damage led them to this sickness unto death (multidimensional homelessness). According to Borg, *The word “salvation” comes from the same root as “salve,” a healing ointment. Salvation thus has to do with healing the wounds of existence. Wounds of existence are many and deep. Some of these wounds are inflicted on us, some are the result of our own doing, and some we inflict on others.* Therefore I love to replace the term “salvation” with terms “restoration, liberation and healing.”

How 55 sermons came about? Over the years, I began to compile my sermons – especially the motivational sermons I preached while I was on a speaking tour (for the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.). The theme of all of these sermons or keynotes included here are in reference to poverty and homelessness. I hope readers understand that after all, I am a pastor for the homeless; I carry them under my wings and in my heart when I preach and write. I hope readers might hear their voice through my voice, and also through their voice hear the voice of Jesus. That is the sole purpose of my preaching, speaking and writing. I hope this Volume can serve as a resource for leaders who preach or teach on the poverty/homelessness themes.

Why am I writing about the poor/homeless? For over 4 decades, as a licensed mental health counselor, social worker and a Presbyterian minister, I have been serving the homeless people in the US. As I approaching 80th birthday, I want to document all my experience, research and knowledge I have for the homeless, whom I call my family before any memory leaves my brain. This is my last gift that I am leaving for this world in hope that they will motivate my children, grandchildren as well as the younger generations coming after me to care for their poor/homeless neighbors around them by learning from my experience in serving them. I dare to hope that this series of five volumes can serve as a resource for individuals, churches, religious communities and teaching institutions that are interested in and concerned about the poor/homeless. I also leave the entire proceeds from these books

to and for the cost and related cost for the education and job/skill training of my homeless friends that they may get up and walk toward self-sufficiency and end their homelessness.

I present **definitions and terms** in relation to (physical) homeless issues that are developed by government agencies, and are being used by service providers. I also understand homelessness from multi-dimensional perspective-physical, emotional, social and spiritual. Each volume presents the description of each aspect of these homeless state.

Throughout all five volumes I have used **the poor/homeless** simultaneously as a single concept because all homeless are poor. Poverty is one of the major causes of homelessness and the poor are at a high risk of being homeless although not all the poor people are homeless.

Why five volumes? For the past 30 years I have been studying, speaking, writing, researching, and compiling resources on the homelessness issues. Summarizing many decades of work, study and experience in one book is so huge that I divide them in 5 stand-alone volumes under different themes in order to present the homelessness issue more comprehensively. Even though the focus of this proposal is on the first volume I have given a brief synopsis of the remaining four volumes in the series to put it in context.

Why the title of these volumes is “People in Purple?” I have been called “Woman in Purple.” I earned the title from people who have seen me in a purple T-shirt every day since 1997. I chose the color purple when I developed a T-shirt with a message, “End Homelessness for all People” as part of the national campaign of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to end homelessness for all people. I have only worn purple since then.

Purple is the liturgical color of royalty and traditionally has been used during the season of Advent. Purple can also symbolize pain, suffering, and therefore mourning and penitence. It is also the liturgical color for the season of Lent: the time when Christians grieve, lament, and repent for Jesus’ suffering, reflect upon their lives in prayer and fasting, repent their personal and corporate sins, and commit to serve the Lord more faithfully. Likewise, in my purple T-shirt, I grieve, lament and repent for having so many homeless people in this affluent country, and commit to love and serve Jesus Christ by serving the homeless and to work toward ending homelessness. Personally it also represents my own pain, suffering and mourning of many tragedies and losses (in Korea as well as in the United States). The color purple has become not only my personal identity but also my homeless mission color. Because the color purple can also symbolizes pain, suffering, and mourning of

homeless people who lost everything including their jobs, homes, families, identity, health, pride, joy and hopes, they deserve to be called “People in Purple.”

I hold the pain of my Lord, Jesus, dear homeless friends, and my own deep in my heart. My love for Jesus is my love for the homeless and my love for the homeless is my love for Jesus. As Jesus participates in my suffering and pain, I too participate in his as well as the homeless. Therefore, every day is Lent for me in my purple shirt. My life is a purple life, and I am called the “Woman in Purple.” I call the Great One “Jesus in Purple,” the service I offer “Ministry in Purple,” and my homeless friends “People in Purple.” Thus naturally the title of this book, this series of five volumes, is “People in Purple” because it is their story.

My view, understanding, analysis, interpretation and critique of the homeless issue may be basic but it comes out of my experience of many decades in listening, talking and serving people who suffer from poverty/homelessness. I also quote other scholars’ opinions who have enriched me, hoping they will do the same for the readers.

I am deeply indebted to many local and national coalitions and scholars – economist, and theologians – who enriched and supplied me resources on the issue of the rich, poor, and the homeless. I owe huge thanks to Rev. Gary Cook of the Bread for the World and Rev. Jack Wilson, a retired Presbyterian Pastor for writing the foreword for volume five. Heartfelt thanks also to Cathy Roper in Seattle, Washington for proofreading and editing my manuscript of volume five. Huge debts to Steve & Marcy Hong, Mickie Choi (Hoe), Mia Park in California for offering me a room to hide and write. I am grateful to Chan Hie Park, Cecilia Kim, Paul Han, Jasmine Valentine, Shin Hwa Park & Duk Nan Cho, Esther & Hana Na and Suhn Park in California for providing me with ways and means while I was writing away from home. Huge thanks to Nest Mission staff and Board for allowing me to go away to hide and write these volumes, and their support and encouragement. Last but not the least, thanks to my son, daughter-in-law, all my grandchildren, my nephew and his family for their support in numerous ways for this huge work of writing. This means I didn’t write these volumes alone. It took a whole community of caring people. Without their support, encouragement and prayer these volumes could have never been a reality. However, above all, it was

the abundant grace of God who motivated and sustained me throughout all these years, especially last year while I was writing these volumes.

Brief introduction to volume 1-4.

In Volume 1, I invite readers to understand the meaning of homelessness and the reality and root causes of homelessness in the United States. I identify 43 areas of direct and/or indirect reality and root causes of homelessness. Only one of them is considered to be the personal and the rest are viewed from sociopolitical, economic and cultural perspectives. Also included are my own interview results on homelessness that includes opinions from 50 professional service providers/ advocates, 50 from the general public and 50 homeless persons. I also identify 45 myths and present facts that challenge these myths and our incorrect understanding of homelessness. I included a brief comparison of the way the United States and Europe deal with poverty issues. The appendix includes my personal testimonies about what motivated me to serve the poor/homeless as an immigrant (from Korea).

Volume 2 is about Biblical (Old and New Testament) studies and/or the theological positions on poverty/homelessness. After learning the troubling truth about how we have created poverty and homelessness in the U.S., readers may now raise a question as to how God sees this reality and if God is happy with the way we do homeless mission in the U.S. Thus, Volume Two is an attempt to discuss that question: what is the biblical position on poverty/homelessness?

I walked through the whole Bible trying to bring to light many deeply hidden insights to poverty/homelessness written in the Bible. The Bible has a multitude of indications of poverty/homeless situations. I reviewed God's and Jesus' position on poverty/ homelessness who challenge, warn, indict, and sentence those who exploit and oppress the poor. Then I add St. Paul, James, and John's position on poverty/homelessness. The final part of Volume Two is the critique of contemporary church mission including diagnosis and treatment. I hope that readers' conscience may be awakened to the demand of God. Now after reading about the disturbing reality of poverty/homelessness in the U.S. and the Biblical position of them, some readers might ask "what must I do now?"

Volume 3 is written for those who have read Volume One and Two and might be motivated to develop or be engaged in homeless mission but don't know what to do and where to start. I present 106 homeless mission ideas, large and small, a person or a church can be involved with. A brief description of 106 mission ideas in the form of "Need" (why necessary) and "Mission" (what could be done) is presented. 106 mission ideas in Volume Three come from my many decades of experience of seeing, doing and meeting the needs of the homeless. One of 106 ideas is public policy advocacy. I give an extended separate chapter for it because we won't be able to end homelessness unless there is major public policy change. I also share my own experience in 15 different mission programs which I have served, founded or co-founded from their inception. My experience of serving or starting a homeless mission didn't take much professional knowledge or large amounts money or many people. I always started very small and grew according to the needs of people and volunteers' availability. After reading Volume Three I hope people no longer ask "What can I do?." I used to make my audience laugh by suggesting them to go to see a psychiatrist if any church or individual cannot or will not do at least one of them.

Volume 4: For those who read the first three volumes, some might wonder what others are doing and wish to visit some of them but cannot. Thus, in Volume Four I introduce the 103 of 155 homeless mission examples that I visited in the United States while I was on my speaking tour (1998-2004).

I hope these five Volumes will be useful in motivating some readers to serve the most downtrodden brothers and sisters in our society, and may serve as a resource in developing many more missions toward ending homelessness.

And in the end of each volume, I add an appendix to share my personal testimonies because many people ask what motivated me to serve the poor/homeless as an immigrant. I confess that all of our life troubles, tragedies, illness and pains can motivate us to do something good for others and society with the help from God. And I also claim that it is my time to share the abundant blessings with the poor/ homeless that I have received in this country, my new home.

I recommend those who are concerned or interested in homeless issues to read all five volumes in order to get the full perspectives of the poor/homeless.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Volume 1: Who and Why People are Homeless.



Jean Kim is a retired minister and a former staff of (national) Presbyterian Church (USA) for the issue of homelessness. She is also a Washington State certified social worker and a certified mental health counselor.

Jean Kim is an immigrant from South Korea to the United States in 1970. Since most of her career life in the U.S. – for over 4 decades - has been serving the homeless people up to the present.

Jean Kim is a graduate of Han Kuk Theological Seminary, Korea (BD in 1959), Dan Kuk University, Korea (BA in 1960), St. Louis University (MSW in 1977) and San Francisco Theological Seminary (D. Min in 2006).

Jean Kim is a founder and co-founder of 10 mission programs: Founder of Olive St. Social Club, Seattle (a day center for the homeless), Cherry St. Social Club, Seattle (a day center for the homeless), the Church of Mary Magdalene (of homeless women), Seattle, National Korean American Coalition for the Homeless, National Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness, Nest Mission for the homeless, Seattle, Regional Presbyterian Networks to End Homelessness (Washington State) and International Ministry at the University of Washington (Campus Ministry), Seattle; co-founder of the Agape Church for the Homeless, New Haven, CT and Korean Community Counseling Center, Seattle. She received 20 Community Service Awards including Woman of Faith Award from Presbyterian Church (USA), Medal of Honor from Korean government and Hero

of the Homeless from the Nightwatch in Seattle. She is a minister/social worker/mental health counselor for the homeless, an organizer, preacher, lecturer, workshop leader and writer on homelessness, domestic violence, women's issues, and clergy sexual misconduct.

OTHER BOOKS BY JEAN KIM

1. Jubilee Manual: Jean Kim's End Homelessness (2000 in English).
2. Video: Jean Kim's End Homelessness (2000 in English).
3. Video: Jean Kim's End Homelessness (2000 with Korean caption)
4. Plant the Cross: Reality and Root Causes of homelessness (2008 in Korean).
5. Is Women's Leadership Acceptable as is Now (co-authored, 2009 in Korean).
6. Is Women's Leadership Acceptable as is Now (co-authored, 2012 in English)
7. People in Purple Vol. 1. Why & Who are Homeless? (2015 in English)
8. People in Purple Vol. 1. Why & Who are Homeless? (2015 in Korean)
9. People in Purple Vol. 2. Biblical Position on the poor/homeless (2015 in English).
10. People in Purple Vol. 2. Biblical Position on the poor/homeless (2015 in Korean)
11. People in Purple Vol. 3.106 Homeless Mission Ideas (2015 in English)
12. People in Purple Vol. 3.106 Homeless Mission Ideas (2015 in Korean)
13. People in Purple Vol. 4. 155 Homeless Mission Examples (2015 in English).
14. People in Purple Vol. 6. Articles & Sermons (2015 in Korean).
15. A Woman in Purple Vol. 7. Autobiography (2015 in Korean)
16. A Woman in Purple Vol. 8. Autobiography (2015 in English) and many articles.
17. Clergy Sexual Misconduct (2015 in Korean)