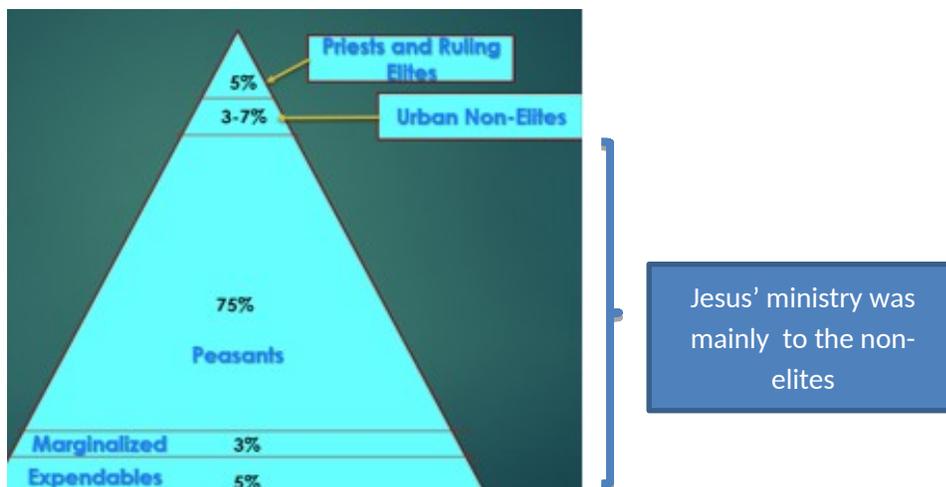


## Week 4: Spiritual Learning Journal

Wealth distribution was not very equal in antiquity. Usually, 5-7% of the population owned 90% of the wealth. Nearly everyone else was struggling to feed their families as best they could, thus Roman taxation became a problem.

Jews also had a strict understanding of holiness and judged people based on how holy they thought the person was. Those associated with the Temple, Israel's holiest site, were at the top of Jewish society, while the unclean, marginalized, and expendable were at the bottom. Some historians estimate that in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. 5% of the population were priests, scribes, bailiffs, and tax-farmers; 3-7% were urban non-elites such as merchants and artisans, including specialized day laborers; 75% of the population were peasants including large and small freeholders, tenants, village artisans, day laborers, and slaves; 3% were the unclean and marginalized, and 5% were the expendables such as beggars and the disabled.



Two other issues:

1. The type of work you did could render you unholy, such as working with the skins of dead animals. Contact with blood also rendered one unholy. These kinds of issues were dealt with by ritual washings that made people holy again. Mikvahs were pools that contained water for ritual washings.
2. The priesthood was divided into 3 groups: (1) the high priest, (2) ordinary priests, and (3) Levites. All 3 were descended from the tribe of Levi. All priests were Levites, but by no means were all Levites priests. The lower priesthood, the Levites, cared for the service of the sanctuary as musicians, gatekeepers, guardians, Temple officials, judges, and craftsmen.

Read the following passage and answer the questions at the end using everything you learned this lesson:

**Luke 10:25-37** (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup> He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' "

<sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

<sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

<sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

<sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

<sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

<sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

<sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

<sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

#### Questions:

1. What background issues are in this passage that we covered this week?
2. As you read this familiar story again, how has your understanding of this story changed or become deeper?
3. How might you retell this story using contemporary characters to represent the Samaritan, priest, and Levite? For example, a South African artist paints a black man helping a white Afrikaner.



#1 The priests would not help the injured man because it would cause them to be unclean, by touching blood. Jews would not have anything to do with the Samaritans because the Jews considered them half breeds, part Arab and part Jew. The wealthy would not help, they loved their wealth and did not associate with the poor.

#2 You can say you love God, but if you don't really love people, you don't really love God. The world will know we belong to Jesus by our love for one another.

#3 A Muslim helps a Christian.