

The problem of Prosperity Preaching in the Light of Matthew 26:6-13.

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Abstract

Like wild wind the Church is now engulfed by prosperity preaching, which is the approach of material procession from God through positive confession induced by Christian preachers. This contemporary religious phenomenon in African Church society calls for concern in the mind of believers. Today, it is like God reacts in man's favour when He is given surprising huge money called seed of faith as though there are gifts that can set God on his heels no matter who gives it. A critical contrast with Jesus' response to Judas Iscariots reaction against His anointing shows that there is something wrong with this idea that sound as if God is a money doubler or that God made a mistake in not creating all fingers equal. And that the size and carriage of one's God depends on his ability to make one wealthy, healthy and prosperous negating the fact that God had created a situation where all things must glorify Him; like caring for the poor. This research applied critical exegetic examination of Matt.26:6, related literature, journal and internet materials found that extreme Prosperity preaching runs contrary as (a) Biblical truth as it places material possession as a yard stick for measuring the kind of God the believer is serving; (b) it draws a thick line between the relatively poor and the very rich brethren in the same faith. This research recommends for a return to the standard gospel that focuses on salvation than prosperity preaching to eradicate the commercialization of the Church.

Key word: Poverty, the Poor, and Gospel of Prosperity, commercialization Exegetical Analysis

Introduction

The contemporary wave of neo-religious movements in Africa had left people to ask as to, what would have been the ultimate purpose for the advent of Christianity into Africa. And furthermore, to compare the original form of Christianity at its infant stage in Africa and its contemporary jolted state. Taking the Church of Scotland Mission which came into Nigeria in particular through the Cross River basin (Calabar in particular) by the Jamaican Missionaries in 1846, glaring show that the Church came in with the spreading of the true gospel and the civilization of Africa. These objectives were vigorously pursued with the opening of mission stations, Mission Schools, Mission Hospitals and Agrarian ventures. The relics of these contributions still echo loudly all over the place. It was the same with other missionary outfits all over Africa. They virtually provided every thing including prefabricated building materials for the residence of the Missionaries, Churches, Schools and even social gathering places for the people. Morally the Church had zero tolerance for corruption as Teachers and Catechists never waited for panels and committees to determine the plight of the erring ones. Then the supervisors of schools were demy-gods and had sound judgement for every immorality. Moral and civic education was not just a subject of studies but a way of life. Pastors, Catechists and Mission Teachers were the local jury whose sound judgements were worth it. There was a dressing code that challenged the rough worldly fashions or nudity. Churches were in competition on the issue of moral impeachability hence the Presbyterians would claim to be as straight as the Rule. Then the preacher could sleep wherever night had befallen him or her.

Like wild wind the Church is now engulfed by loud shouts as though of victory but that of prosperity messages. This is sharply in contrast with rudimental teaching of Jesus Christ that challenges men to repentance. The sound of a dropping pin can be heard in the Church to day during sound gospel message than the boisterous sound that punctuates prosperity messages. Phone ringing tones are made up of prophetic utterances that promise death to real and imaginary enemies with background Amen(s) and Hallelujah(s). Today it is like God reacts in man's favour when He is given surprising huge money called seed of faith as though there are gifts that can set God on his heels no matter who gives it. A critical contrast with Jesus' response to Judas Iscariots reaction about Mary Magdalene's anointing shows that there is something wrong with this idea that sound as if God is a money doubler or a debtor that must pay, or that God made a mistake in not creating all fingers equal . And that the size and

carriage of one's God depends on his ability to make one wealthy, healthy and prosperous.

This negates the fact that God had created a situation where all things must glorify Him, and caring for the poor is one of the ways.

Today, the craving for materialism has displaced the virtues for which the Church was known in Africa. Contemporarily every pastor is after number not membership, quality, magnificent buildings, flashy Cars and money not souls for Heaven. Now the church is like a fashion parade ground where it is difficult to distinguish between the Harlots and the Believers.

Things have gone so bad that the dailies are awash with varying degrees of negative stories from the Church. Today, is like everything is about money, money, money. To achieve this

there is the creping in of crazy quest for titles like Doctor (without University degrees),

Prophets, Prophetesses, and all kinds of names just to attract recognition not by output or

God's approval. Native doctors and witches and wizards now find places in Churches which they either found themselves or the ones they crept into. The pictures of preachers are now

the points of attraction than salvation messages, false claims and search for secret powers are reported along with religious associated ritual murder cases. For prosperity's sake the

pastors' device all kinds of means by which to raise money not minding the financial status of members who must sow bountiful prosperity seeds by fire and by force. It is like saying that

the Church is now the agent of impoverishment than agent of social well-being of the

believers in Africa which was *abi nitio* the bad rock for mission. It is noteworthy here to state

that one is not soliciting for the Stone Ages where the African Churches were spoon fed, No,

but for moderation among the Churches with her primary objectives placed in the front

burners. It is obvious that African churches are today independent and are capable of funding

herself without any form of manipulation of the membership in the name of prosperity gospel

as it is unacceptable to feed the church with chaff and hoodwink her into church

commercialization scheme for the benefit of the Priests.

Conceptual Framework

Poverty

Poverty is the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money (debility due to malnutrition or lack of fertility) or material possessions, or renunciation as a member of a religious order of the right as an individual to own property. It is indigence penury want destitution; meaning the state of one with insufficient resources. Poverty may cover a range from extreme want of necessities to an absence of material comforts (the extreme *poverty* of

the slum dwellers). While indigence implies seriously straitened circumstances (the *indigence* of her years as a graduate student), penury suggests a cramping or oppressive lack of money (a catastrophic illness that condemned them to years of *penury*). Want and destitution imply extreme poverty that threatens life itself through starvation or exposure (lived in a perpetual state of *want*) (the widespread *destitution* in countries beset by famine) (Merriam-Webster dictionary. 2012).

The Poor

The poor in general terms could be defined as one who lacks material possessions, or characterized by poverty or less than adequate resources to depend on. On the other hand one who is lacking spiritual or material possessions could be said to be poor. The poor could be seen from two perspectives as the bible shows, the first as in "...the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3), and secondly as in "the poor always with you" (Mt 26:11) and those in need of arms "...give to the poor," (Mark 10:21). The second group are the people the believer may need to express his/her charity on, while the first group require a spiritual touch as to be satisfied. While this paper had undertaken to place the story of the anointing of Jesus Christ in its context, it is necessary to mention the fact that the paper's focus is neither on the woman, the cost of the ointment nor on Jesus' approval, but on Jesus Christ's response as it relates to the poor being always with the people. "The poor always with the believers" simply implies that poverty is a natural phenomenal continuum that can only come to an end in the city of equality and equity – "Heaven" - a place where the poor will be compensated at the bosom of Abraham and those rich unto self-regret.

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, which he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. (Luke 16:23-25)

Adams reflecting on Matthew 26 verse 9, said that charity much of the time serve as a cloak for covetousness as God is robbed of his right under the pretence of devoting what is withheld to some charitable purpose, to which there was no intention ever to give it. For Adams this disciple of Jesus Christ (no matter the withheld name by synoptic gospel authors) was not genuinely sincere in his expression as John 12: 6 puts it, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief. As he had the money box he used to take what was put into it". John insists that Judas appealed to charity to stop reduction in the treasury as

it is common with some treasurers who find it difficult to fund Church projects for the love of keeping more money they can draw from for their private uses.

Clarke, (2000) commenting on Matthew 26 verse 11, quips that the disciples had the poor always, and consequently, have the opportunity of doing them good at any time; but not himself as his bodily presence was about to be terminated. By implication Jesus had maintained that the poor provides opportunity for the believers to express love. In Matthew 19:21 Jesus said to the self claimed repentant rich man, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." This story buttresses the fact that the poor were part of Christ's scheme, hence he had the mandate to preach to them in Luke 4:16ff. In deed the anointing to preach to the poor did not state that Jesus had come to remove poverty even though that may not be a palatable condition. One thing that is evident is that it is not correct to assume that poverty is a crime of any person as it may not rightly be referred to as a curse. Nor can it be attributed to God's inability to provide for his subjects as some prosperity preachers will want their audience to believe. But in the poor the believer expresses God who is love as the image thereto.

Gospel of Prosperity or Prosperity Gospel

Prosperity gospel precipitates from Neo Religious movements which is... is nothing but a charismatic form of Christian Science. It is

the fastest growing segment of professing Christianity in recent years...among churches connected with the Positive Confession movement or Word-Faith movement (all part of the modern Charismatic movement). It has involved two distinct but closely related factions: the Norman Vincent Peale/Robert Schuller Positive-Possibility thinkers/Positive Mental Attitude, with their roots in New Thought; and the Kenneth Hagin/Kenneth Copeland Positive Confession and Word-Faith groups, which have their roots in E.W. Kenyon, William Branham, and the Manifest Sons of God/Latter Rain movement... It does not yet constitute a new denomination, but it certainly represents innovative teachings outside of mainstream Christianity. The situation is so serious now because of the dominance over the so-called Christian media achieved by the teachers of Positive/Possibility Thinking and Positive Confession (www.rpidnet.com/~jbead/bdm/Phychology/char/more/w-htlm).

On the spiritual sphere prosperity gospel is a veritable instrument in the hands of the preachers who themselves are struggling to survive from the clutch of poverty. This contemporary wave of gospel presentation revolves around wealth, money and other individual material enhancement of the believer. In many cases it is presented in such a way

that Christianity is portrayed as having missed the point far behind by concentrating on the gospel of “Christ crucified” more than riches and firm. Following the growth rapidly noticed in prosperity gospel movement

a body of research has developed that has been preoccupied with tracing the relationships between Pentecostalism, modernity and neo-liberalism... At the same time a parallel literature has developed that associates discourses about witchcraft in Africa with changing patterns of production and consumption and with new forms of wealth... In this literature, witchcraft has been accounted for in terms of moral economy; as a levelling force opposing new material inequalities, or conversely as a force in the accumulation of wealth and power... On the other hand, Pentecostalism has been shown to address issues of wealth and inequality, particularly through the so-called prosperity gospel, but also through its ideas of demonic agency ... An overlapping theme in studies of both witchcraft and Pentecostalism has been their associations with individualist ideologies of modernity and with transformations of social relations and kinship. Both the spread of Pentecostalism and the resurgence of occult beliefs and practices have been related to economic transformations and the neo-liberal economy. Since the mid-1980s, following structural adjustment and economic liberalisation, there has been an increase in both Pentecostal churches and discourses of occult activity in Tanzania (Africa). (Freeman 2013).

It is also discovered that different preachers approach the presentation of the gospel from a pure business and marketing perspective wherein the material gain of each programme is the ultimate target than the original business of God’s saving of souls. The influence has so engulfed the Church (generic) that all passages of the bible are interpreted in the light of wealth and capitalism. These preaching are punctuated with intermittent prophetic pronouncements which aim at psyching up the believer to bring out the last money in his or her pocket. Alter calls are seldom in such gathering of the believer as the un-churched are not the target. Things are becoming so confusing that the preaching of the cross is becoming obsolete. Good looking and oratory is now an added advantage to every preacher as ability to play on words is a sure way of raising more money. Preachers are hired on percentage for their ability to raise money and not souls. Passages are handled with reckless abandon as hips of quotation as are made out of context or unexplained. Things have gone to the extent that basic Christian principles are being sacrificed on the Alter of “Seed of Faith” which are sown at each prophetic pronouncement. According to Robison (2013), “Jesus focus on the joy of giving, not on the promise of return is grossly neglected... what some ministers teach today about money often encourages greed”.

Numerous people’s... lives have been negatively affected by this unbalanced teaching on giving. The teaching has come from ministers who are using Scriptures on "getting the return" to appeal to the Western materialistic mind-set. "Just give and it will come back," these ministers tell the crowds, with a fervour that convinces many listeners. They refer to a thirty-, sixty- and hundredfold return in a way that implies the contributor can expect to receive an immediate blessing--presumably so his or her debts can be quickly eliminated. The fact that

some people's spending habits and financial practices should be drastically altered is not even addressed...Some ministers believe they are teaching the truth, and they may be sincerely seeking to help the hearer... My intention is not to accuse anyone of deliberately misleading or manipulating those whom they impact. But I've seen firsthand the unhealthy consequences of this type of teaching, and the manipulation breaks my heart. (And because of the level of poverty in Africa people ordinarily incline towards this teaching like the tree sourcing for the source of photo-Sun for photosynthesis) (Robison 2013).

Like wild wind the Church is now engulfed by loud shouts as though of victory but that of prosperity messages. This is in sharp contrast with the rudimental teaching of Jesus Christ that challenges men to repentance. The sound of a dropping pin can be heard in the Church today during sound gospel message than the boisterous sound that punctuates prosperity messages. Phone ringing tones are now made up of prophetic utterances that promise death to real and imaginary enemies with background Amen(s) and Hallelujah(s). It is like God reacts in man's favour when He is given surprising huge money called seed of faith as though there are gifts that can set God on his heels no matter who gives it. A critical contrast with Jesus' response to Judas Iscariots reaction about Mary Magdalene's anointing shows that there is something wrong with this idea that sound as if God is a money doubler or a debtor that must pay, or that God made a mistake in not creating all fingers equal. These brands of messages portray a sense that the size and carriage of one's God depends on his ability to make one wealthy, healthy and prosperous. Proper analysis here creates in the mind of the believers "Individualized God" as the worth of one's God shows how rich he is by the amount of wealth and money such individual controls and the poorer one is the manifestation of one's God. By this human creation the ideology of individualized gods in Buddhism manifests. This negates the fact that God had created a situation where all things must glorify Him, and caring for the poor is one of such ways.

For fear of the lopsided effect of this movement

McConnell points out that "any new religious movement [within Protestantism] must bear the scrutiny of two criteria: biblical fidelity and historical orthodoxy." Regrettably, the Positive Confession movement fails on both counts. The historical roots of this movement (which Charles Farah has called "Faith Formula Theology") lie in the occult, and most recently, in New Thought and its off-shoot, the Mind Science cults. Its Biblical basis is found only in the peculiar interpretations of its own leaders, not in generally accepted Christian theology (www.rpidnet.com/~jbead/bdm/Phychology/char/more/w-htlm).

However, this paper sought to balance Jesus' disapproval of Judas' discountenance of His anointing by a certain woman by re-examining the passage within which this occurred.

Gospel of prosperity is a materialistic Christian belief and a doctrine taught in some Christian groups that God will grant wishes to the faithful, especially those wishes involving material wealth by their prayers and inducement on God. Prosperity

...movement grew rapidly in the American South and in the impoverished urban areas, meanwhile dividing into dozens of small, contentious sects separated by doctrine and by such practices as faith healing...After the 1960s, prosperity through faith became a dominant theme, taken up by Roberts and other television evangelists. But all the Pentecostal sects—ranging from the largest, the Assemblies of God, to small storefront churches—shared an ecstatic tone that continued to have a powerful appeal in the United States, Latin America, and Africa. The movement in Europe, after rapid growth in the early 20th century, had stabilized by mid-century. A similar movement within the Roman Catholic Church, the charismatic movement, won large numbers of followers beginning in the 1960s (Microsoft Encarta: 2009).

Gospel of prosperity or prosperity theology teaches that Christians are entitled to well-being and, because physical and spiritual realities are seen as one inseparable reality. This is interpreted as physical health and economic prosperity. Teachers of the doctrine focus on personal empowerment, promoting a positive view of the spirit and body. They maintain that Christians have been given power over creation because they are made in the image of God. They teach that positive confession allows Christians to exercise dominion over their souls and material objects around them. Leaders of the movement view the atonement as providing for the alleviation of sickness, poverty, and spiritual corruption; poverty and illness are seen as curses which can be broken by faith and righteous actions. There are, however, some prosperity preaching churches which seek a more moderate or reformed paradigm of prosperity. Caldwell, pastor of a Methodist mega-church, supports a theology of abundant life, teaching prosperity for the whole human being, which he sees as a path to combating poverty. This "... American author and televangelist, argues that prosperity is governed by laws, while other teachers portray the process formulaically. Journalists David van Biema and Jeff Chu of

Time have described Word of Faith Pastor Creflo Dollar's teachings about prosperity as an inviolable contract between God and humanity” (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity_theology).

However, most scholars are of the view that wealth is interpreted in prosperity theology as a blessing from God, obtained through a spiritual law of positive confession, visualization, and donations. Most people

simply define the prosperity gospel as “the gospel that promises only financial breakthrough,” or “the preaching that does not address the concern of salvation from sin but only emphasizes that God will make everyone materially rich.” Some others define it as “the gospel that people should accumulate material things.” Yet others define it as “the gospel that defines poverty as sin.” Two points sum up these definitions: It is exclusively financial, and it neglects the spiritual well-being of the people. The definitions above suggest that non-prosperity preachers formulated the definitions, and that they are derogatory and misleading. Prosperity preachers would not define their own theology so negatively. This explains why many of those that legitimately belong to the category refuse to identify with the term. There is hardly any Christian denomination that does not preach salvation from sin. Also, there are an insignificant number of denominations that interpret poverty as sin. Most preachers of the prosperity gospel overwhelmingly reject this view of poverty. It is therefore unwarranted to derive the interpretation of a concept from the view of an insignificant minority of the group (George, potii.rg/cyberj/).

Sarles (1986) commenting on prosperity teachers says that their “method of interpreting the biblical text is highly subjective and arbitrary. Bible verses are quoted in abundance without attention to grammatical indicators, semantic nuances, or literary and historical context. The result is a set of ideas and principles based on distortion of textual meaning” Indeed, a survey of the volumes of literature produced by the prosperity teachers yields numerous examples of such misinterpretations. Prosperity teaching insists that the paradigm of one’s physical well being determines how benevolent one’s God is. This gospel equates the essence of God’s reality and reliability with the abundance of ones material affluence than spiritual well being hence poverty remains a curse that a Christian is exonerated from by his or her faith in Christ

Jesus. This gospel seem not to take cognizance of the record of Luke 12 ; 15, "...man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." and 1 Timothy 6:7-9

There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

Proponents of prosperity gospel tell people that the blessings of God depend on how much one gives for the welfare of God's servants whose anointing are infectious enough to attract God's favours on those that favour the prophets. They fulfil 1 Timothy 6:7-9,

For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction,

by varying degrees of act of greed and unprintable practices to attain their goals. They live ostensible life at the expense of members who by simple analysis do not realize the much orchestrated prosperity.

Prosperity gospel is different from social gospel which is the base for the provision of social amenities by the Church as a means of bridging the gap between the haves and the have-nots as earlier mentioned. It rather seams to take from those who do not have, and the little they have is swindled into the bags of the rich prophets. And in other to achieve this focal point of prosperity gospel; the proponents set themselves as proves of the reality of their teaching by the application of human manipulations that hoodwink believers to exploit the unsuspecting. In Africa as well as in other parts of the world, prosperity gospel remains the after mat of Pentecostal bid to bridge the gap between the preachers of the gospel and the wealthy members of the society. It is assuming some alarming proportion in the recent past leading to several unorthodox and sharp practices which are inimical to Christianity. The most worrisome aspect of it is that the unsuspecting enquirers who are bent on fighting poverty are on daily bases being hoodwinked by dubious people under the cloak of prosperity message. As part of social change, it affects natural or African native soothsayers and diviners who are

now losing their trade for the prosperity preachers who replace charms with bottles of anointing oil or stickers that can ward off evil men and spirits. It is common to find holy water bottles or oil or sticker hung on farms and at individual doors, which hitherto was the product of the native doctors for those that believed in them.

Preachers who have charisma with which to sale their wares go as far as the planting of flowers in the Alter which is diabolic means of reaching the end. In some cases, it is difficult to differentiate between the church and the shrine of the native doctor hence corruption in the house of God. While this work was being concluded, a news item in one of the Nigerian dailies reported of the nabbing of a prophet and some of his members suspected of ritual murder. Such sporadic flashes abound giving no one any joy cogitating on the side effects of prosperity preaching. Nonetheless the hermeneutics of the prosperity movement leaves much to be desired.

Commercialization

African mission efforts date back to over 130 years ago for the Evangelization of Africa. This was basically carried out from America. They were non-profit corporation and their aims included

- Helping to alleviate the poverty and deprivation that are still widespread in Africa by funding projects that foster self-reliance.
- Raising the awareness of the plight of the African people through Mission education and various publications.
- Providing up-to-date information relating to justice and peace issues that concern the countries in Africa where we live and work.
- Working with Africans on structural changes that will help build the Reign of God and thereby helping them to become agents of their own liberation.
- Helping to bring about healing and reconciliation.
- Being bridge-builders to help promote inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue (Missionaries of Africa 2006-2008).

From the preceding paragraph it stands glaringly that a large percentage of what the church is doing in Africa today is deviant from the original intent and content of mission, hence the problem of commercialization.

What actually is ‘commercialization’ one may ask? The word is derived from commerce connoting the ideology of managing a business basis for profit, developing commerce to

exploit for profit, or to debase in quality for more profit. In the case of the Church, commercialization simply means to run church meetings and programmes with the view of making money or garnering material substances in the name of giving to God hence every meeting must end in offerings and seeds of faith. The underlining intent and content of this type of propagation is all about personal wealth acquisition but in the name of God. The height of this method of Church business has risen to the level that a lot of things go for the worship of God as far as such applied tricks could generate money. The church has become so commercialized to the extent that even committee meetings snowball into fund raisings almost always. Confusing practices and doctrines are therefore on the increase in the churches. These strange practices and doctrines are steadily robbing off on the true gospel and the spiritual standard of what used to be the hope of the hopeless leading back into Carl Marx's definition of religion as the opium of the masses. The contemporary state of the church challenges history which is all about originality and the aim of the church's entrant into the continent of Africa. To get at the root of the matter this research went down memory lane to determine the initial intent and content of global mission which is all about souls winning and discipleship (Matt. 28:19-20). At this juncture it might be pertinent to define who a missionary is and what the original motif of mission enterprises in Africa was before the present day twist that makes the church a market place than a place of the worship of God.

Missionaries were members of a religious groups sent into areas to proselytize and/or perform ministries of service, such as education, literacy, social justice, health care and economic development. The word "mission" originates from 1598 when the Jesuits sent members abroad. The word Mission derived from the Latin missionem (nom. missio), meaning "act of sending" or mittere, meaning "to send". The word was used in light of its biblical usage; in the Latin translation of the Bible, Christ used the word when sent the disciples to preach in his name. The term is most commonly used for Christian missions, but can be used for any creed or ideology (Wikipedia, 2015 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/main_Page).

There is no gain saying; the fact that what is referred to as missionary effort mostly by Africans themselves are not in consonance with Church mission but business enterprise. This situation rises from lopsided presentation of prosperity gospel in Africa. This is worrisome as it calls for a theological address to moderate this good aspect of the gospel that is being beclouded by materialism. As it is, the theological study of this movement and analysis of all such examples of misinterpreted texts fall within this scope to buttress the harm so far caused the true gospel.

Exegetical Analysis on Matthew 26:6-13 and 3 John 2

Matthew 26:6-13	Exegesis
<p>Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head, as he sat at table. But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."</p>	<p>The pouring of ointment on Jesus head here was done in Simon's house by a certain woman. Matthew and other synoptic authors here declined the woman's name but John 11:2 refers to her as Mary the sister of Lazarus of Bethany. The monetary value of this ointment is put at a year's wage. Mark and John report did fix the cost at three hundred denarii. Barnes commenting on verse 9 translated the cost of the ointment at three hundred pence or about forty dollars or N 11, 880 for current Naira exchange rate. The disciple's reacted unfavourably to this colossal expenditure. John reporting the same event in 12:4 mentioned specifically that it was Judas Iscariot that raised the alarm of waste. While the disciple Judas Iscariot or else other disapprove the benevolence of the woman; Jesus Christ approve if it; and added that this was to remain a lasting legacy or memorial to the credit of the woman as that was not just ordinary as it was more prophetic concerning the burial of Christ. Jesus' further response in verse 11^a was <i>tous pnōchous echete meth' eautōn</i>- (Alland et. al. 1996: 101) the <u>poor will always be with them (people)</u> whereas he himself was about to depart.</p>

The pouring of ointment upon the head of Christ was a token of the highest respect. Where there is true love in the heart to Jesus Christ, nothing will be thought too good to bestow upon him. The more Christ's servants and their services are cavilled at, the more he manifests his acceptance. This act of faith and love was so remarkable, that it would be reported, as a memorial of Mary's faith and love, to all future ages, and in all places where the gospel should be preached. This prophecy is fulfilled. This singular action was "Christ's Final Announcement of his Death, as Now within Two Days, and the Simultaneous Conspiracy of the Jewish Authorities to Compass It—The Anointing at Bethany—Judas Agrees with the Chief Priests to Betray His Lord" (Jamieson biblehub.com/commentaries).

Pulpit commentary on verse 11, “Ye have the poor always with you”, says, St. Mark adds, "and whensoever ye will ye may do them good," opines that this is in strict accordance with the old Law: "The poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land" (Deuteronomy 15:11). The existence of the poor creates space for the exercise of the graces of charity, benevolence, and self-denial; and such opportunities will never be wanting while the world lasts. “Me ye have not always”; i.e. in bodily presence. When he speaks of being with his Church always to the end, he is speaking of his Divine presence. His human body, his body of humiliation, was removed from the sight and touch of men, and he could no longer be received and welcomed and succoured as heretofore. In a different and far more effectual mode he would visit his faithful servants by a spiritual presence which should never fail or be withdrawn. To the objectors he would say, "You will no longer have opportunity of honouring me in my human form; why, then, do you grudge the homage now paid me for the last time?" (Pulpit Commentaries biblehub.com/commentaries) And you rather can express the divine law of doing charitable works on the poor who will always be there. By implication Jesus Christ unequivocally state that there is no time all will be rich a like. Common sense also lends credence to this axiom. Of course man causes God to receive thanks in the act of charity and expression of benevolence.

3 John 2	Exegesis
<p>This bible passage is presented here in two different translations which are RSV and KJV.</p> <p>Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health; I know that it is well with your soul.(RSV)</p> <p>Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.(KJV)</p>	<p>I wish above all things- <i>peri panōn euchomai éχομαι</i>. Above all things I pray that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, <i>kai ugiainein</i>, to which one MS. adds <i>en aleueia</i>, which gives it a different meaning, viz., that thou mayest be sound in the truth. The prayer of St. John for Gaius includes three particulars: 1. Health of body; 2. Health of soul; and 3. Prosperity in secular affairs. That thou mayest Prosper and be in Health, as thy Soul Prospereth. These three things are so necessary to the comfort of life, every Christian may in a certain measure expect, and for them every Christian is authorized to pray; and we should have more of all three if we devoutly prayed for them. It appears from the last clause that the soul of Gaius was in a very prosperous state (Adam). If one follows Adam it is clear that Gaius’ fitness into the Kingdom of God could not have been determined by material prosperity; although that would have been necessary. In this comment Adam does not place material prosperity on the priority pedestal as the prosperity preachers do.</p>

	<p>Barnes, in addition opines that, “it is not necessary to suppose, in order to a correct interpretation of this, that Gaius was at that time suffering from bodily indisposition, though perhaps it is most natural to suppose that, as John makes the wish for his health so prominent. This passage cannot stand the textual application for material prosperity (Barnes).</p>
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Beloved, I wish above all things - Margin, "pray." The word used here commonly means in the New Testament to pray; but it is also employed to express a strong and earnest desire for anything, Acts 27:29; Romans 9:3; 2 Corinthians 13:9. This is probably all that is implied here. The phrase rendered "above all things" - περὶ πάντων peri pantōn - would be more correctly rendered here "concerning, or in respect to all things;" and the idea is, that John wished earnestly that "in all respects" he might have the same kind of prosperity which his soul had. The common translation "above all things" would seem to mean that John valued health and outward prosperity more than he did anything else; that he wished that more than his usefulness or salvation. This cannot be the meaning, and is not demanded by the proper interpretation of the original...The sense is, "In every respect, I wish that it may go as well with you as it does with your soul; that in your worldly prosperity, your comfort, and your bodily health, you may be as prosperous as you are in your religion." This is the reverse of the wish which one is commonly constrained to express for our friends; for such is usually the comparative want of prosperity and advancement in their spiritual interests, that it is an expression of benevolence to desire that they might prosper in that respect as much as they do in others (www.godvine.com/bible/3john).

From the above presentation it is clear that prosperity preaching which revolves round materialism may not have be the centre piece of the author’s advice to Gaius and by extension not to be so emphasized without balance. And through the study of the theology and biblical interpretation of prosperity gospel, one may discern five clear reasons why this movement’s teachings concerning wealth are incorrect:

1. Prosperity gospel is built upon a faulty understanding of the Abrahamic covenant in which

... God promises to make Abraham a great nation, to bless him, and to make his name great...The elements of the covenant are threefold: making Abraham into a great nation, blessing Abraham personally, and blessing all nations in Abraham. The promises of the covenant are unconditional. The rest of the OT repeatedly refers back to God’s oath to Abraham in the Torah. The NT does the same by

pointing out that Jesus Christ, Abraham's seed, will make possible the final fulfillment of that covenant in the future (Essex K. H. 1999)

2. Prosperity gospel is built upon a faulty understanding of the Atonement.
3. Prosperity gospel is based upon a faulty understanding of the biblical teachings on giving.
4. Prosperity gospel is based upon a faulty understanding of the biblical teachings on faith.
5. Prosperity gospel, in general, has been constructed in negligence of the Cross though it may be mentioned in passing in course of preaching, and
6. Prosperity gospel negates the law of charity in Deuteronomy 15:11 "For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore, I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land" by teaching that poverty is a curse.

Recommendations

This research recommends that;

1. The church returns to the standard gospel that focuses on the salvific sacrifice of Jesus Christ than welfare for the prophets without salvation in return,
2. The Church makes deliberate effort geared towards the eradication of the commercialization of the body of Christ, and
3. Prosperity preachers should be reminded that one came into the world with nothing and one will leave the world with nothing, rather than burden the soul with mundane things the church should focus more enduring values.

Conclusion

In concluding this paper one may state that though the disciples of Jesus Christ condemned his anointing by a certain woman, Jesus himself did not see that benevolence any less a welcome development. He saw in it a prophetic action geared towards his death and resurrection or and announcement of his departure as that prepared him for it. It is a fact that this woman expressed high sense of generosity by this singular and rear event. On the other hand the disciples' preference for the poor was not a sincere approach as the author of John's gospel would have it.

The same passage buttresses the fact that there is no end to the existence of the poor among the believers on earth until the final consummation. This passage also recalls the Deuteronomy 15: 11 “For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore, I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land”, which is the Jewish law of brotherhood. In the poor the Jews were to express the grace of giving as it is applicable to the spiritual Jews- the believers. The Christian is to express God’s kindness and generosity by giving to the poor in Africa, and not castigating them as prosperity preachers tend to do. Poverty is not a curse and the poor is not cursed.

By extension this passage cuts prosperity preaching at the root since poverty is not a curse, as earlier mentioned, but the act of God or the mistake of the individual. This passage rejects the notion that all believers must be rich as to prove that they are serving a living God. Otherwise it proves that the believer who has not the whole world serves a different God from the believer who happens to be rich. If this notion stands the test of time, though it has never and will never, it means the stunningly rich brother has a different God. This also presupposes that the Christians have two Gods/gods whichever may be the used spelling.

Finally, this paper concludes that 3 John 1:2 is not a good locus standi with which to annul Deuteronomy 15:11. It is untrue as it is impracticable judging from visible evidence among believers. For instance, how many had by faithful claiming of a thing got it, rather it creates covetousness. The mere fact that all fingers are not equal lends force to the position of this paper. While one wishes that the Church prospers in all ramifications; one may remind the believers that what should be of high demand should be godliness and contentment which is a great gain. While the prophets and other anointed men of God may not stop talking about prosperity they need to tailor their message in line with the pure milk of the word to avoid 21st Century heresy in Africa.

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