

Internationally popular recording artist Sarah McLachlan recently released the second music video from her most recently released album, *Afterglow*. The video for “World On Fire” begins with emboldened text that reads, “**This Video cost \$150,000.**” Over the course of three-and-a-half minutes, the video uses images, text and the words of the song to explain that the \$150,000 it costs to produce a professional music video can provide schooling, mobile medical units, food and structurally safe shelters for people around the world who struggle against poverty and oppression to survive each day. In an inspiring twist, the video closes by stating that, while the total cost of this video experience totaled just over \$148,000, with only fifteen dollars involved in the actual production of the video and the rest going to the aid of the starving and oppressed around the world.

Jesus spoke often and straightforwardly about the responsibility of his followers to care for the poor and the needy. In Mark 10, Jesus tells his student that he must “go, sell what [he owns], and give the money to the poor” in order to inherit eternal life. In direct contrast to what modern wisdom would lead us to believe, for Jesus, the greatest wealth and security is found in a relationship with humankind that is marked by complete sacrifice and a relationship with God marked by complete dependence. In Luke, Jesus is again reported as saying, “Sell your possessions and give alms.” Jesus goes on to instruct his disciples to make purses for themselves in Heaven- to store a treasure that no thief can steal and cannot be destroyed. Surely, the American and international economic infrastructure offer many opportunities for people to secure their financial future, but what does the abundance of wealth hoarded by so many American Christians communicate to those around the world who struggle to find their next meal?

Walter Rauschenbusch, Christian theologian and father of the Social Gospel, writes, “Conversion is most valuable if it throws a revealing light not only across our own past, but across the social life of which we are a part, and makes our repentance a vicarious sorrow for all... Therewith [the converted] step out of the Kingdom of Evil into the Kingdom of God.” For Rauschenbusch, Christian salvation is only fully realized when one throws off one’s selfish desires to acquire wealth and power, and takes on this deep compassion for the socially oppressed. The words of Jesus are clear regarding a Christian’s responsibility to care for the destitute, and Rauschenbusch and other theologians have developed Jesus’ teachings into a philosophy of care for the poor. Those truly committed to the words of Jesus can easily recognize his mandate to resist the temptation to acquire wealth in this world, instead choosing to release others from their suffering and need as Jesus himself did.