

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Michael Lennen
Topeka, KS

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Dear Editor:

Among the more perplexing actors in the political arena are those who purport to rely on Jesus' words to justify ignoring needs of lower income citizens. Roger Marshall is one of those actors. He explained his opposition to the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion by quoting Jesus for the proposition that "the poor will always be with us." Marshall conveniently, or perhaps ignorantly, left out the associated Biblical message upon which this scripture is based which teaches that the circumstance of widespread poverty requires people to be generous and open-handed with their neighbors.

His statement also ignores principles that are the bedrock of Christian theology—to love one's neighbors as oneself and to be mindful of what one does "to the least of these." Whatever considerations may have motivated Marshall's position on the Affordable Care Act, they cannot rationally be drawn from Jesus' teachings—or underlying Christian principle.

Marshall compounded his ill-conceived theological comments by advising that a lot of lower income people just don't want health care and won't take care of themselves. Setting aside the personal arrogance infusing this comment, Marshall apparently is unaware or doesn't care that many lower income workers may not have the financial capability or employment flexibility to make regular doctor's visits or to purchase prescribed medications; that they may not live in areas that have reasonable access to healthier foods or exercise facilities; that they may have overriding family obligations that take precedence over their own health care needs; or that they may have existing, underlying conditions that affect both their income producing capability and susceptibility to serious medical risks.

Having affordable health insurance and access to care does not solve all of these problems—but it does help address many. We can be certain that not having access to affordable health care will ensure that tens of thousands of Kansans and tens of millions of Americans will suffer needlessly from treatable illnesses. As that happens, we all lose—economically and spiritually. Marshall's approach will ensure that we fail to capitalize on the potential strength of a healthy and robust workforce. It also denies the value we realize as Americans from embracing our common humanity and making thoughtful, good faith efforts to care for the least of us.

Sincerely,

Michael Lennen