

**GOOD FOOD
HEALTHY CHANGE**

CBM

 The Sharing Way

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Theological Reflections & Preaching Points

The Sharing Way Annual Appeal 2012

Exodus 3 relates how God called a man named Moses to act on behalf of slaves whose labour was a vital component of the Egyptian economy. The Egyptian social system worked well for the elite and perhaps even for the average Egyptian. However, their well-being was based on the exploitation of people who lived on the margins and were treated as less than human. The Biblical text emphasizes three things: (1) God heard the cries of suffering people, (2) he resolved to act on their behalf, and (3) his desire to give a good future to the Hebrew slaves depended on the human agency of Moses (Exodus 2:23-25; 3:7-10).

In our world, women, men and children continue to cry out to God for relief from suffering. Like the Hebrew slaves, the economic system works against them and their lives are threatened. There are approximately one billion people who suffer from chronic hunger in 2012. This means that the desperation of hunger affects one in every seven people. Most of these people will not die of starvation. However, they do not have the nutrition required to live productive lives and to enjoy good health. In the case of young children, the lack of adequate food and micronutrients (such as vitamin D and iodine) will have a devastating impact on their future mental and physical development.

In 1974, diplomatic representatives of 135 countries voted in favor of a declaration that stated "... every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition." U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger even predicted that within a decade no child would go to bed hungry. The human right to food and the confidence of Kissinger are of little comfort to those who are hungry almost forty years later. Even in our own country of Canada almost 900,000 people a month depend on supplies from a local food bank. Most food banks are challenged to keep up with the demand.

We can use the text of Exodus 3 to consider the alignment between the situation of the Hebrew slaves and the desperation of our own age. People are crying out to God. The economic structure of the world does not respect their needs as people created in the image of God. God hears the pain of those who are broken and desires to act on their behalf. The fulfillment of God's will requires human action.

There is a strong Biblical tradition that encourages us to respond to the needs of those who are hungry as an essential act of faith.

-  Isaiah 58 draws the connection between injustice and hunger. The prophet calls on family units to open their homes and their tables to the poor who live around them. The practice of religion has little meaning without engagement with the hungry.
-  Luke 14 contains Jesus' teaching about overthrowing the reciprocity of social convention among peers and using one's banquet table to feed people on the margins who are hungry - the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. He tells a parable about a man who turns a humiliating social rejection into a joyful event in which the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame are welcomed to his home.
-  2 Corinthians 8 and 9 contain Paul's instructions to the church in Corinth about famine relief for people in Jerusalem. It is striking that slaves and ordinary workers are invited to join God's work in feeding the hungry in a distant part of the Roman Empire.

In each of these Biblical passages, the response to hunger is intensely personal and costly. In our modern world we need to recognize that programs that address hunger issues need to do two things:

1. Provide adequate food supplies when the needs are critical without distinction of race, gender, politics or religion.
2. Assist families and communities to become food secure through agriculture production and employment opportunities.

There are some wonderful examples of integral mission of local churches in Canada who are helping their brothers and sisters in the developing world.

-  The financial contributions of many Canadian Baptist churches in 2011 allowed CBM to provide food aid to Somali families in refugee camps in Kenya.
-  Highland Baptist Church in Kitchener sponsored a dryland agriculture training centre in India through CBM. Canadian volunteers were sent to work on the property.
-  New Life Baptist Church in Duncan supported an urban microcredit program in Bolivia that helped families to increase income through small business operations.
-  Canadian Baptist women's groups raised funds for women who had been victims of sexual violence in Congo. A significant portion of the budget provided loans for women to start small businesses in order to improve family nutrition.
-  New Minas Baptist Church and Port Williams Baptist Church in Nova Scotia sent research agronomists from their congregations to Rwanda and Kenya to provide technical support for CBM programs.
-  Lorne Park Baptist Church in Mississauga, Westview Baptist Church in Calgary and Brownfield Baptist Church annually partner in a grain project that raises approximately \$50,000 for CBM's account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

THE POOR cry out to God for relief.
GOD HEARS their desperation and calls on his people to respond.
OUR PART is to follow God's leading with **COMPASSION, GENEROSITY** and a
SENSE OF JUSTICE.