

Minister's Message – July 2005

Africa – Poor or Rich

As the leaders of the world's eight richest nations meet in Scotland to discuss among other things the problem of disease and poverty in Africa, we might reflect on what was happening in Scotland just 165 years ago. A young Scotsman, not long out of medical school, was just as concerned about Africa as Tony Blair and others, but his concern was very different and it led him to a very different response.

David Livingstone had heard the missionary Robert Moffat say 'I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been'. Those words touched the heart of the young Livingstone, and hearing the call of the Lord he sailed for Capetown in December 1840. He spent the rest of his life traversing Africa, bringing the gospel to the people. He called upon them to turn away from sin and obey the Lord. Like other missionaries he worked to stop the slave trade and also the practice of polygamy and the destruction of twins.

What a different world we live in today. The rich and famous jet into Africa from time to time, and then hold pop concerts calling for all debts to be cancelled. They see people dying of AIDS and call for more condoms and drugs to combat this terrible disease. The world leaders are thinking hard about cancelling debts and maybe dropping trade barriers – thinking hard whether it would be politically astute or not that is!

But then there is the worry about corruption. If some African leaders get more money they may only line their own pockets leaving the bulk of the population in poverty. Trade, we are told, will solve the problem. But what will they trade? When the poor people can barely produce enough corn and beans to feed their family what will they trade?

Drop the debt, drop the trade barriers, give more aid – all this should have been done long ago. But this is not the greatest need for Africa. This will not save Africa. Africa needs men and women to turn and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to live according to the commands of Christ. This is what this continent needs first and foremost.

What about the Western nations contemplating how to help Africa? They also need to hear the truth of the gospel – and even more so. It was not long ago that the African Church leaders were teaching to their Western counterparts what the Bible says about homosexuality and women leaders in the Church. Though financially rich, the Western nations have become spiritually poor?

In Jesus Christ there is no divide between slave and free, rich and poor, black and white, African and European. *For you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28). There is a glorious oneness in Jesus Christ that transcends all earthly differences. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only thing that will bring about this oneness, for it leads men and women from every nation and tribe and tongue to submit to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

David Livingstone read Psalm 121 the morning he set out for Africa. Why don't you pause and read it now?

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon