YOU CAN'T SAY THAT

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Some promises are not ours to make. Beware of Christian fundraisers who promise results!
Category: Observations

I don't suppose that I need to point out that mission is all about the work of the triune God. The life, death and resurrection of the Son is the foundation of what we call mission. It is the Son who is building his church, it is the Spirit who inspires people to be involved in mission and who breathes new life into people, all this according to the will and purposes of the Father. I could multiply ways in which God is active and I could cite lots of passages of Scripture to prove the point. However, I think we can take the principle as read.

When we are involved in mission, in whatever capacity, we are participating at God's invitation in a work which he originated and which he will complete. Our participation is a mark of his love for us; he could quite well do mission without us, but he loves us so much he brings us into his central purpose for the whole of creation.

One implication of this is that we need to be very cautious about making any claims about our influence or agency in mission. We simply can't promise that our interventions will achieve anything. The Spirit blows where he will and he is the only one who can guarantee success in mission.

However, this doesn't stop some mission fundraisers promising that if you give money to them, then specific outputs will be achieved. So much money will see a church planted, or a number of lives transformed. OK, it is possible to estimate how much it will cost to dig a well, to equip a classroom or even to translate a book of the Bible. What we can't do is promise specific spiritual outputs from those interventions. The only one who can promise that is God and generally, he doesn't conform his actions to our fundraising targets.

If we promise that giving an amount of money will result in lives being saved, churches planted or something of that ilk, we are ascribing far more power to money than it actually deserves. This might be good capitalism and good fundraising technique, but it is bad Christianity. Worse, it elevates money to a place that only God deserves. God is the one who determines success in mission, not hard cash.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't give money to Christian causes - far from it. God calls us to be generous and, amazingly, he uses our generosity to extend his kingdom. However, we need to be wise in who we give our money to and in our expectations of what that giving will achieve.

Frankly, if anyone says that they can guarantee spiritual results as the result of your gift, give your money to someone else. They have no right to make that promise and you shouldn't encourage

them.