A CALL TO MISSION: RECONCILIATION

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Category: Bible & Mission

Why would we bother translating the Bible, when there are people all around the world going hungry and suffering from poverty and disease?

This is the second post in a series addressing this simple question (read the first one here).

Perhaps the simplest answer to this question is that hungry people need Jesus, too! They need forgiveness and reconciliation to their creator through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This doesn't mean for one moment that we shouldn't care for people who are hungry and suffering. Jesus makes it perfectly clear that his followers should help those in need. Christian love compels us to feed the hungry, and give water to the thirsty, but it should also push us to tell people about the good news of reconciliation with God through Jesus.

So far, so good. I don't suppose many evangelical Christians would argue with this. However, we still get asked why we translate the Bible for hungry people! Like a good preacher, I reckon there are three points to be drawn here.

- We have a problem in modern Western Christianity in that we draw a strong division between the spiritual and physical worlds; between evangelism and social action. The Bible doesn't make this distinction and Jesus envisages his disciples dealing with people in a holistic fashion, not as disembodied souls or or purely physical bodies.
- There has been a long tradition of somehow assuming that poor people get a special access into eternity. The idea seems to be that because people have suffered greatly on this planet, then they have done all that is necessary to be reconciled to God. This is an attractive idea, it fits our notions of fairness, but it doesn't line up with what the Bible teaches.
- Linked to the other two points; I believe that the British church is losing confidence in the big message of the Bible. We are nervous about saying that 'people need Jesus'. We don't want to sound exclusivist, extreme or 'fundy'. We are at ease meeting the need for food, medicine or clean water, but very uneasy about suggesting that people 'need to be saved'.

If we take the Bible seriously, we must address people in the way Jesus did; we must provide food and water, but we must also tell them about the Good News of the Kingdom. Some people have to live in a hell on earth - we need to work with them to make the earth better and we need to tell them about Jesus so that they don't face a hell in eternity too.

It's not a fashionable message, but it's true!