

Saturday "Sermon"

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Because I Have Been Given Much

Several weeks ago I participated in a church planting effort in Malawi, a small nation in southeastern Africa. Several persons from various churches in the Bristol area also participated, together with several dozen persons from South Africa.

Working through Harvester International Ministries in Johannesburg, (www.mission.co.za), we were able to help literally thousands of persons come to faith in Jesus Christ and then immediately connected these new believers with new churches (of various denominations) in their own villages, with pastors whom they already knew, and with Bibles in their own language. It was an unbelievable experience, one from which I hope I never "recover."

The central thing on my mind at the moment is a new awareness of the absolutely incredible wealth you and I enjoy in this nation, and the spiritual accountability we have for what we do with it—for what I do with it.

The average per capita income for persons in Malawi is \$1.64 per day, or \$600 per year. The pastors with whom I worked lived in mud brick houses with thatched roofs, dirt floors, and no furniture. During the days I was with them, these pastors were away from their families. I was sleeping on a cot in a tent and eating pretty well; they were sleeping on dirt floors in borrowed rooms in primitive villages and eating tasteless cassava gruel. They had nothing with them all week long but the clothes they were wearing when they left home.

As I reflect on this experience, I realize that I would be embarrassed for my Malawian friends to see how I live. My car is nearly twelve years old, but I'd be ashamed for my friends to see its relative opulence. Our house isn't fancy by U.S. standards, but it would be a king's palace to my new friends.

I'm not sure how I need to respond to this awareness, but the words of Grace Crowell's old hymn capture the essence of the questions in my heart after Malawi: "Because I have been given much, I, too, must give. Because of Thy great bounty, Lord, each day I live, I shall divide my gifts from Thee with every brother that I see who has the need of help from me. Because love has been lavished so upon me, Lord, a wealth I know that was not meant for me to hoard, I shall give love to those in need, shall show that love by word and deed: thus shall my thanks be thanks indeed."