



Sermon Notes
By Rev. Roy Berkenbosch

Text: Luke 12:48

Title: I CARE About Ending Hunger... But What Can I do?

Some Biblical texts point us immediately to the summons to seek justice for the poor—the story of the Good Samaritan, or the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25, or Jesus’ instructions to the rich young ruler come to mind. But in fact the whole of scripture—sometimes directly and sometimes implicitly—announces God’s deep and abiding concern for the poor.

Every scripture reading, every sermon, and all our worship should be forming us as a people who love justice as God loves justice and who serve others in imitation of Jesus.

As thoroughly as economic justice is woven into the fabric of scripture, so tightly and thoroughly must it be woven into the fabric of our lives. This is especially necessary in a global economy that intertwines our economic decisions and practices with those of people around the world and leaves the poor ever more exposed and vulnerable.

On this CFGB Sunday, I want to focus our attention on a particular line of thought which we find in Luke 12:48. This section of Luke concerns itself with Jesus’ teachings about readiness for the coming day of the Lord. We are summoned to be wise managers of all that God has entrusted to us, and Jesus concludes his teaching with the admonition that, “from everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.”

What might that mean for the church as we think about the persistent challenge of poverty and hunger? **I’d like us to consider Jesus’ teaching in terms of three graduating levels of responsibilities that we have to the poor.** These three levels correspond to three ways of thinking about poverty and hunger.

One common way to think about poverty is as material deprivation: people are poor because they don’t have the stuff they need – not enough food, not enough money, not enough clothing.

When people lack stuff, sometimes the right thing to do is give stuff. When church members roll up their sleeves to serve in the local soup kitchen or homeless shelter, this service can an effective way to say: I CARE. More dramatically, when an earthquake strikes Haiti or another typhoon devastates the Philippines, nations turn their pockets inside out to help, including supporters of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

To whom much is given, much is required. In my experience, most North Americans are acutely aware that we live very privileged lives of abundance, and this is reflected in the generosity of gifts received by CFGB. I’ve seen the delight of farmers involved in harvesting grains using a dozen huge combines to donate land and time to this cause. Such commitment is also reflected in how we spend our time. Many people volunteer for a host of agencies that aim to relieve suffering at home and abroad. **There actions are powerful ways to say “I CARE!”**

As it turns out, poverty and hunger are usually not simply the lack of stuff, but are often the outcome of lack of skill and education and training that enables people to acquire the goods they need. The second level of responsibilities that organizations like CFGB and its partners have recognized and responded to is to provide training and support to help increase the capacities of individuals and communities to provide for themselves. This involves training people in everything from literacy to kitchen gardens to crop diversity to water harvesting to primary health care, to leadership training and so much more. **Supporting such efforts, either by participating, praying or offering financial assistance are good ways of saying, “I CARE.”**

People with specialized know-how, research tools and libraries and teaching abilities, academic degrees and technical skills, have fanned out across the world to increase crop yields, conserve soil and water, educating farmers about sustainable practices and so much more. Praise God for that. It makes a difference. The number of children under 5 who die from hunger and preventable illness is down from about 40,000 per year in 1990 to less than 15,000—still an unacceptable number, but an improvement nevertheless

From those to whom much is given, much is required. **Whether you are a young person making plans for a career or a boomer about to hit retirement—you are a gifted person with skills and experience and education to share with others.** Why not think about spending some time with CFGB, learning about community development and maybe finding a niche where you can give back some of what you’ve received. **These steps are all actions that say: “I CARE.”**

But here’s the hard reality: **hunger and poverty are not simply a lack of stuff or lack of education and skill.** The truth is, many people in poor communities are excellent fisher-folk and farmers, industrious, motivated, and skilled—but they remain poor because unfair global trade policies and economic systems and political complexities very often do not work for their well-being. Strategic decisions about aid distribution often concern themselves more with self-interested foreign policy than the needs of hungry children. **Making poverty history requires also that we build better structures and systems, that we design and implement just economic policies that serve people in their needs.**

Rather than be overwhelmed, we need to remember Jesus words: to whom much is given much is required. So what have we been given?

In addition to our wealth and our time, we have also been given a voice with which to speak out. We can advocate for those whose voices have been silenced, championing the rights of those who have no access to the levers of power; offering leaders helpful input into the development of policies and strategies that make a difference in the lives of those suffering food insecurity. **Advocacy is a really great way to say, “I CARE”**

Consider this: Based on share of its national income, Canada gives about half the amount given by like-minded countries and only about a third of the globally agreed amount. **Yet the very international programs which depend on financial assistance are put at risk when we fail to live up to our commitments.**

This does not reflect the generosity of Canadians as a whole and certainly does not reflect the patterns of contributions of the supporters of CFGB. **We have been given a voice—let us speak out and remind our political leaders that we care!**

A quick visit to the CFGB page on World Renew’s website will inform you of other really important campaigns aimed at overcoming food insecurity, assisting small farmers to adapt to the reality of climate change and more. These campaigns need your voice; they need you to care.

Remember, if you are one of those to whom much has been given, from you much is required. **CFGB and its partners can help transform your caring into actions that make a difference. Are you in?**