

Minister's Message – November 2011

Seven Billion

The population of our planet has reached seven billion. This is almost double what it was in 1970. Even back then many doubted that the planet could support more people. Back then there was concern at feeding so many people. Today the concern is more about how all these people will damage the environment. But still there are questions about how to feed seven billion people. Notwithstanding technological advances in food production, over a billion people still go to bed hungry.

Can we produce more food for this vast population? Do we have to produce more food? Did you know that over a third of the food produced in the world is wasted? Just 25% of the food wasted in rich countries would feed all the world's hungry. Wandering through the supermarket our visitor from India asked what happened to all the fresh food on the shelves. What indeed!

It is estimated that we waste 20% of the food we buy; 25-35% of school lunches end up in the bin. Think of the 'scraps' from your plate, the left-overs thrown into the bin, and the food you never got around to eating. What happened to the old saying 'waste not want not'? The instruction 'eat what is on your plate' is now, 'if you don't like it, bin it' – of course wise parents will know what to put on the plate. How much food goes to waste in your house? Do you stop to think about those who do not have enough to eat?

As we think about seven billion people we also ask about where they will live and what they will wear; not to mention access to health care. For such things they need money. Who has all the money? Just 1% of the population have 40% of the world's wealth. Is it right that some with million dollar salaries, or dare we say half a million or less, live in luxury while another human being lives under a sheet of plastic and draws water from a well or river contaminated by sewage?

When the God of Israel fed his people in the desert he ensured that no one had less or more than they needed. How much is needed you might ask. Do we not all have the same size stomach? But even with this manna from heaven some gathered much more than they needed and tried to stash it away. In the New Testament church everyone shared what they had. Referring to the manna Paul wrote 'that there may be equality; that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that there abundance also may supply your lack (II Corinthians 8:14). He was not saying this because of some political agenda or concern for the environment. He was concerned about loving one's neighbour as taught by Jesus.

'There was a certain rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day' (Luke 16:19). He lived in luxury while a sick, malnourished beggar sat at his gate. The beggar was called Lazarus but the rich man is not named. Did Jesus leave it open for you to sign on the dotted line?

Consider what you waste. Not that you must eat more, but buy less. Avoid advertising and impulse buying. If it's not in the fridge you can't eat it! Think about those who long for the food you waste. Think about how the Lord supplies your needs, be thankful, and be looking to share with others.

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