

Dear Friends,

***What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?***

Justice is a fundamental part of God's character and therefore a dominant theme in the Bible, yet when we see such injustice in the world we can feel helpless and overwhelmed in our desire to change things for good. I was once very proud to belong to a country that committed to give 0.7% of GDP to overseas aid and development. However, as you will be aware the government has now reduced that to 0.4% of GDP. Any reduction to foreign aid is troubling, especially now, given the circumstances of the global pandemic and the challenges it has brought. The impact on livelihoods, the closure of schools, and the loss of lives has affected all of us the world over, but in the poorest parts of the world, these effects risk setting development back by decades.

Jesus identified with those who are poor, vulnerable, or forgotten. In John 10:10, Jesus speaks of a vision of fullness of life. Following his example, we should seek fullness of life with dignity, justice, peace and hope for all people especially the most vulnerable.

The UK has always been a world leader in its commitment to ending poverty worldwide and has set a proud example for others to follow. It is vital that now, when global leadership is most needed, we show that this commitment remains a priority. Currently, humanitarian emergencies across the world are drastically underfunded having already endured aid budgets being reduced. The £500 million worth of cuts announced by our government will significantly impact international development, with the most vulnerable suffering the cost of what risks becoming a dangerous precedent.

As the effects of Covid continue to exacerbate the difficulties in poorer countries, some predict a major spike in the cases of children experiencing physical, emotional and sexual violence. Whether they are forced to stay at home, or, in time, are sent to work or pushed into early marriage, boys and girls face a bleak future – unless governments, UN agencies, donors, NGOs, and the private sector do everything they can to protect them.

For anyone sceptical of aid, and it is easy to be sceptical of what we don't have direct experience of, it is encouraging to note that the infant mortality rate has more than halved in sub-Saharan Africa since 1990 and high-quality aid has played a significant role. Health workers are trained to ensure pregnant women are well and that deliveries are safe. Vaccination campaigns take place and child malnutrition is addressed in communities every day as a result of overseas aid and development.

Tyndale Baptist Church in Bristol was bombed during WWII. Prior to the war the church had planned to plant a new church in the growing suburbs. Amazingly the church plant still remained their priority after the war even though their own building lay in ruins. Our country's aid and development budget should be a priority even in the difficult times we find ourselves.

In his actions, Jesus challenged authority when he needed to and a key part of our mission as his followers is to do the same to achieve fullness of life for those denied it. We should all continue to challenge the reduction in aid and development to the most vulnerable places and people as part of our witness in the world of God's unconditional love for all. I think my MP must be fed up with me, but if that's what it takes I will continue to express my concerns whenever and wherever I see injustice. I hope that you will too.

***May God's richest blessing be yours***



Samuel King