

Awake to the Harvest?

by Bob Young

The gospels record two occasions when Jesus declared the fields ready for harvest (Matt. 9:35-38; John 4:34-38). Jesus declared the harvest plentiful and ready. I wonder whether we believe that his statements are still true today. I wonder because it appears that our awareness, vision, and commitment to the harvest—evangelism and missions—are limited.

One thing has surely not changed—our world needs the gospel. My own experience says the world is hungry for and receptive to the gospel. We are training some workers, but too many go to fields already worked and potentially overharvested. We are not using wisdom. We are not sending to receptive areas; we are not touching urban areas. We are not establishing self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating churches. In most parts of our mission world, we are not reaching the population who can sustain the church.

Why do we not send more workers to the real fields? There are not enough workers. We "use up" three or four preachers per congregation in larger churches, and hundreds of smaller churches go without a preacher. Further, what preachers are doing in the local churches is often everything but evangelism.

We can do more, but in order to do more we must reestablish our priorities and primary goals, we must rethink the essence of Christianity, and we must develop effective strategies. Today's sermon discusses these three needs. I ask you to think about and pray about your answers concerning our most important goals, the essential elements of our faith, and the best way to take the gospel to the entire world.

Let me suggest several things which we must consider as we seek to renew the church.

- The "bigger is better" thinking that seeks big numbers and superstore mega-churches is not the only strategy, and is often not an effective strategy.
- The latest wave of religious thinking or fads—third waves, Holy Spirit, better worship, etc.—is not the answer.
- We must rethink our own creeds, clergy, and coercive tendencies.
- We must seek a fresh look at scripture to understand principles and worldviews which are greater than culture. We must understand which changes are cultural and which are principle-based.
- We must hold fast the centrality and supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We must count the cost.
- We must continue in prayer.