The people of the King work to feed the people of the world

By Elijah M. Brown

Why is the feeding of the 5,000 the only miracle performed by Jesus recorded in all four Gospels? Perhaps one reason is because this miracle so clearly demonstrates that Jesus is a king who provides for the real needs of the people of the world.

Scholars believe 75 percent of the people in Israel during New Testament times could be classified as peasants who primarily lived in poor, rural contexts heavily dependent on the food they themselves could grow. In the face of grinding poverty, the provision of so much food would be an overwhelming outpouring of richness and abundance. Only a king could provide so generously.

Hunger remains a powerful force. Famine, malnourishment, and chronic hunger continue to stalk our world. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO), there are 815 million hungry people in the world today. This includes millions of children who are always the first victims in contexts of chronic hunger.

In Jesus' language, these hungry persons are our neighbors.

Though it is not possible to know the exact number of Baptists facing chronic malnutrition, it is possible to build upon the UNFAO data to observe that 21 million Baptists live in food-deficit countries, and 57,000 Baptist churches face the reality of daily hunger in their country. In other words, 45 percent of all BWA Baptists live in these contexts.

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BWA president emphasizes that the church belongs to God
Paul Msiza, president of the Baptist World Alliance, stressed in his report to the BWA General Council in Zurich, Switzerland, that "a church can never be an institution owned by human beings." The church "belongs to God."

Msiza, senior pastor at Peniel Salem Baptist Church in South Africa, noted that "when the church belongs to Christ everyone has a place."

The president reported that Baptists around the world "are doing well. ... Our focus on mission is exciting," he said. And, "as Baptists we are committed to a holistic approach that involves both "word and deed."

"We still preach Christ crucified, we still believe in evangelism, and this is who we are."

Baptists also recognize that "we live in a hostile world" and need to continue the work of advocacy -- "to stand in the trenches with those who suffer. ... We need to stand for justice" until, like Amos in the Old Testament said, "justice rolls down like waters."

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BWA speaks on religious liberty, women, immigrant families
By Tony W. Cartledge

Advocating for religious liberty in eastern Ukraine, protecting women and girls, and keeping immigrant families together were the focus of resolutions approved by the Baptist World Alliance General Council in Zurich, Switzerland, July 2-6.

Religious Liberty in Eastern Ukraine
The first resolution expressed concern about the curbing of religious freedom in an occupied area of the Lugansk region in eastern Ukraine, where Russian forces have taken control of the area and abetted its reorganization as the "Lugansk People's Republic" (LPR).

Protecting Women and Girls
A "Resolution Opposing Violence and Abuse of Women and Girls" responded to issues recently brought to the fore by the #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements. It "Affirms that women and girls are created in the image of God and invested with inestimable worth and dignity as gifts from God, and are essential to the health and vitality of families, churches, communities and national life."

Separating Immigrant Families
The resolution on immigrant families was inspired largely by U.S. actions that have separated many children from their parents at the border, but family separation was recognized as a global problem. The "Resolution on Preserving the Primacy of Family in Immigration" notes that "the human desire to preserve and protect one's family from violence, disease, economic depravity, and other threatening conditions is universal and drives millions of people to leave their homelands seeking better lives for themselves and their family members."

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The Official Report of the Twenty-first Baptist World Congress

Jesus Christ, the Door: The Official Report of the Twenty-first Baptist World Congress

Dublin, South Africa, July 21-30, 2013
About the Baptist World Alliance
The Baptist World Alliance, founded in 1905, is a fellowship of 238 conventions and unions in 124 countries and territories comprising 47 million members in 169,000 churches. Its priorities are nurturing the passion for mission and evangelism; promoting worship, fellowship and unity; responding to people in need; defending human rights and justice; and advancing relevant theological reflection.