

THE ECONOMICS OF JESUS

Habitat uses the term ‘the economics of Jesus’ to describe attitudes about money and resources that Jesus initiated in this new order. The economics of Jesus teaches us to incorporate scriptural wisdom to guide our work. It sets forth four basic cornerstones for people of ‘the God Movement,’

1. God blesses what we offer and turns it into the miraculous

Just as Jesus fed thousands with the loaves and fish packed for a little boy’s meal (John 6:1-14), God provides for our needs when we step out in faith.

The late Tom Hall, former associate director of HFHI, reflected on God’s miraculous acts. ‘‘Rather than complaining about the meagerness of the resources, Jesus took what was at hand, thanked God for it and put it to work. Wonder of wonders, there was more than enough! I do not know just what happened on that Galilean hillside. I do know that when we take what is given and go to work with it to do God’s will, the job can be accomplished.’’

Skepticism and the human desire to be in control often stand in the way of our expecting a miracle, however. Fuller says one of the evil one’s most clever and successful tricks is ‘‘to convince us that a problem is too big—that it would be folly to tackle such a major need with such meager resources.’’

2. God expects us to share our resources

Acts 20:35 reminds us of Jesus’ words that it is more blessed to give than to receive. The early Christian community modeled this lifestyle when members sold their possessions and used the proceeds to care for one another. Many of us have difficulty thinking about giving up our possessions. We have not developed what Fuller calls a ‘‘theology of enough.’’ He explains that we keep striving and scrambling for more things because we are too immature spiritually to see the futility of that type of grasping lifestyle.

We must create a balance, Fuller says, and be assured that God does not mean for us to go hungry or to do without adequate clothing and shelter. He suggests that the biblical messenger John the Baptist clearly explained how we bridge the gap between poverty and affluence: ‘‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise’’ (Luke 3:11), ‘‘This [principle] is outrageously simple,’’ says Fuller. ‘‘And it is the only solution that will work.’’ ‘‘When people make a gift to a Habitat project, they begin a process that keeps on giving around the world. In accordance with the biblical model of tithing, leaders of each Habitat project are asked to give a 10 percent tithe on the money they raise to help build homes in another location.’’

3. Charge no interest and seek no profit

The Old Testament, which Jesus knew intimately, offers this admonition: ‘‘if you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them.’’ (Exodus 22:25)

Fuller writes in his book *Love in the Mortar Joints*, ‘‘The concept of no profit and no interest is absolutely essential in building homes for the poor. Interest is a burden that keeps poor people locked into their situation. It is a great barrier that they cannot climb over to escape. But Jesus’ followers don’t have to make a profit—they are more interested in people than in profits....The economics of Jesus puts no value on profit or interest—but tremendous emphasis on meeting human need.’’

4. Grace and love abound for all, equally

In Matthew 20:1-16, Jesus tells the parable of the landowner who paid laborers in his field the same wage no matter how many hours they worked during the day. This act is one of the most difficult principles in Jesus’ economics for the world to understand. Jesus was not concerned with the laborers’ comparisons and ideas of fairness. Each of us is called to serve at different times. Fuller explains, ‘‘In Kingdom economics, the needs of people are paramount, and the response to those needs is not connected in any way with peoples usefulness or productivity.’’