

And Jesus went about all Galilee

by William MacDonald

Transcript

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” (Matt. 4:23)

A recurring problem among Christians is maintaining the proper balance between evangelism and social involvement. Evangelicals are often criticized for being too concerned with people's souls and not enough with their bodies. In other words, they don't spend enough time feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick and educating the illiterate.

To say anything against any of these ministries would be like criticizing motherhood. The Lord Jesus certainly was concerned with man's physical needs, and He taught His disciples to be concerned also. Historically, Christians have always been out in front in compassionate causes.

But as in so many other areas of life, it is a question of priorities. Which is more important, the temporal or the eternal? Judged on this basis, the Gospel is the main thing. Jesus intimated this when He said, “This is the work of God, that ye believe...” Doctrine comes before social involvement.

Some of man's most pressing social problems are the result of false religion. For example, there are people dying of starvation who won't kill a cow because they believe a relative may be reincarnated in the cow. When other nations send enormous shipments of grain, the rats eat more of it than the people, because no one will kill the rats. These people are shackled by false religion and Christ is the answer to their problems.

In trying to strike the proper balance between evangelism and social service, there is always the danger of becoming so occupied with “coffee and doughnuts” that the Gospel is crowded out. The history of Christian institutions is filled with such examples where the good has become the enemy of the best.

Certain forms of social involvement are questionable if not altogether “out.” The Christian should never participate in revolutionary attempts to overthrow the government. It is doubtful that he should resort to political processes to right social injustices. Neither the Lord nor the apostles did. More can be accomplished through the spread of the Gospel than through legislation.

The Christian who forsakes all to follow Christ, who sells all to give to the poor, who opens his heart and pocketbook whenever he sees a genuine case of need, need not have a guilty conscience over social unconcern.

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