

Congress France - Mission 2000 (1)

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon calls for the Church to integrate evangelism with social action, emphasizing the need for compassion and justice in addressing the world's suffering.

Duration: 1:02:52

Scripture: Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 9:36, Matthew 19:14, Acts 2:45, James 1:27, 1 John 3:16-18

Topics: "French"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the younger generation in the work of Operation Mobilization (OM). He specifically mentions Joseph de Souza, the director of OM in India, who believes in the marriage between social action and evangelism. The speaker then references the book of Amos, highlighting a verse that condemns those who oppress the poor and lack concern for justice. The sermon emphasizes the need for a two-handed gospel, combining acts of love and mercy with the proclamation of salvation. The speaker also encourages believers to follow the four foundational pillars of Acts 2:42: the Apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread (worship), and prayer.

Transcript

Well, it's a very special experience to be back in France again. In the 60s and the 70s, I used to come so often. But somehow in the 80s, with all the other countries that Operation Mobilization is involved in, including all of Latin America and Asia, I've not been to France so much.

I must apologize. We also continue to be chasing our two ships all over the world. But we have never ceased to regularly pray for the work here in France.

And all over the world, I tell people about France and tell people to pray and tell some of them to go. So if you meet the OM teams working in France, you'll find people from quite a range of countries. France was the first country I came to way back when I came to Europe in 1960.

I sailed into Cherbourg on the Queen Elizabeth. Now you're going to know how old I am. And I came to Paris.

I was on my way to Spain. I was not interested in France. I thought they have freedom in France.

They have Christians. They can evangelize their own country. My burden was closed countries like Spain under Franco.

The Muslim world and closed countries like the Soviet Union, where I went the very next summer and where I was arrested. But just those few days in Paris began to change my life. And coming from Madrid to the Soviet Union the next summer, I also spent some days in Paris.

And I began to realize how many millions of people in France had never heard the gospel of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I met a man in Grenoble named Mr. Sleep, Mr. Dormois. And he challenged me about France.

And I met Larry Gannon and some other people. And in that very first year we launched a little bookmobile carrying Christian literature around France. And it was when I was arrested in the Soviet Union and came back into Austria, I realized God wanted to do something in Western Europe first.

And that Western Europeans were the most effective group to carry the gospel into Eastern Europe and even into the Muslim lands like Turkey. The last 30 years we have seen that become a reality. When we think of what God has done, especially in Eastern Europe and what was once the Soviet Union, it is just beyond our imagination.

And so it's quite an emotional and a blessed experience for me to be back in your wonderful country once again. And especially praise God for each church, some new and some not so new, that's represented in this gathering this afternoon. And we know that God wants to bless us during this weekend together.

Now when I came to France in 1960, I came right more or less from Mexico. And it's a coincidence that as I've just arrived here last night, I also have more or less just come from ministering in Mexico. It's a little easier in Mexico because I can preach in Spanish.

Once I learned Spanish, I lost all desire to learn any more languages. Now, that's not exactly true because I did try to learn Russian. But when I got arrested by the Soviets and thrown out of Russia, I lost my motivation.

You can probably thank the Lord that I never learned French. Because if I learned French, then the international headquarters of OM would be in Paris, and you would have me on your doorstep, and I would probably be a pain in the neck. Do you have that expression in French? Someone who's a pain in the neck? It's a problem, they bother you.

In English, I always say when I, in my desire to be more positive about people, if someone is a pain in the neck, then I thank Jesus I'm not a giraffe. Some of you know that wherever I go, I also have books. And I brought some English books with me in the airplane.

But our friends from CLC, who we work very closely with, they have a tremendous display of books. Including what I believe is at least the number one book I've ever read in English. Spiritual depression is cause and cure by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones.

Of 1,000 books I've read and gone through, that's my number one. Now, they even have some George Verwer books. And since these hardly ever sell, it's a good if you can encourage them by purchasing them.

I want you to turn with me now in your Bibles to the book of Amos. As we consider this great subject of the response of the Church to a suffering world, this is a very important book. You have probably noticed that I have become far more better dressed, far more stylish since I first came to France.

And we know that Paris is the center of all style. So I wanted to model my new world jacket. It's a very important thing about this jacket.

It has Los Angeles under my armpit. But it has France on my heart. Now let us turn to the book of Amos.

The Word of God is the authority for all that we're doing and all that we're saying here in France and around the world. And we would not be here if it was not for the Word of God. Which tells us of Christ and tells us of salvation.

Tells us about the Church. Tells us what we're supposed to do day by day and week by week. We're dealing with a very important subject this afternoon.

A subject that I myself have changed on significantly in the last 10 years. I've always believed, of course, that a Christian must be concerned, especially for the poor and the suffering. But I always felt that evangelism was such a priority that I must be careful not to get involved in these physical needs of people too much.

I have been greatly influenced by the Word of God and passages like the one we're going to read. But I've also been greatly influenced by great men of God like Tony Campolo, John Stott, and other men who spoke out about this important subject. The most influential people of all were the younger people, younger generation coming up in Operation Mobilization.

And especially Joseph D'Souza, the director of OM in India. Where we have 350 workers. Because he felt strongly there must be a marriage between social action and evangelism.

Because he was convinced there must be a real marriage between social action and evangelism. Let's look at some of these verses. Let's look at the book of Amos, chapter 5. Or rather, chapter 4, verse 1. Listen to this word.

Cow of Basant who is on the mountain of Samari, you who oppress the natives, who crush the poor, and who say to your husbands, bring, let's drink. And the Lord then announces his judgment on these people who do not care for the poor and who think only of themselves. Look at chapter 5 now.

In verse 21. I hate, I despise your feast days and I will not take delight in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them.

Neither will I regard the peace offerings or your fat beasts. I will not take delight in your sacrifices of communion and your fat beasts, I will not look at them. Take away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thine harps.

But let justice run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Have you made sacrifices and offerings to me during the forty years in the desert, house of Israel? Take away, therefore, Sikuth, your king, and Kihun, your idols, the star of your God, which you have made yourselves. And then going to chapter 6, verse 1. Who are named chief of the nations to whom the house of Israel came.

Verse 4. That lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches and eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the stall. And God shows his hatred and predicts judgment upon these people who were not concerned over justice and the poor. And I would recommend you make a study of the book of Amos.

And other related passages in the Old and in the New Testament. You will begin to get God's heart for the poor. God's heart concerning the need for justice in the nation.

God's heart that our worship and our practical life be one. That we don't gather to sing all these wonderful songs. And that we fail to put the message of these songs into practice in the marketplace, in the factory, and in the church.

There are many things we could look at in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where we can see his concern for the poor and the outcast. Even his concern for children was very revolutionary in that day.

And it still is revolutionary in some places. I think many of you know the name of Dr. Homer Paine. Even well into his 80s, he will not stop serving Jesus Christ.

I was just with him in a half night of prayer. One of the first missionaries I ever met when I came to France as a young man of 21. Little did I ever dream at that time that some years later he would join Operation Mobilization.

And he always had this burden to see churches planted here in France. But he also had a burden for those little babies. And especially those little babies that are not allowed to be born but are murdered in their mother's womb.

And his wife, Mrs. Paine, wrote the first Christian book in French concerning the problem of abortion. As Christians, we have to be concerned about the problems in the society in which we live. We must respond in compassion as we see the lostness of people.

We're reminded of Matthew chapter 9 in verse 35. Jesus went about to the cities and the villages teaching and preaching the gospel and healing the sicknesses of the people. Now we know that praying for the sick is part of the ministry God has given us.

But we also know from 10,000 testimonies of how God uses the medical skills of doctors and nurses and other people to care and to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ throughout the world. I have visited about 40, 50, 60 different countries. And I am a great admirer of the work that missionaries are doing.

Sometimes we hear missionaries say, Sometimes we criticize the work of missionaries. Of course, missionaries make mistakes. They are human beings just like all the rest of us.

And myself, I am sometimes very critical towards my own group within OM and even for myself. But I admire and really see with a lot of respect the work of medical missionaries all over the world. I don't know where the world would be if it were not for the great gospel of Jesus Christ that has gone out across the nations and changed people's attitudes toward the poor and toward the suffering and toward the mentally ill.

I don't know where the world would be if it were not for the great gospel of Jesus Christ that has gone out across the nations and changed people's attitudes toward the poor and toward the mentally ill. And even in India, where of course they did not accept the gospel for the most part, they accepted within Hinduism the evangelical principles concerning the poor. And of course we don't have time to go into these things, but it's a fascinating subject.

And we see the motive of the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 36 of the same chapter. A very powerful verse. In the sight of the crowds, he had compassion for them, for they were lashed and slain like sheep that have no shepherds.

And he said to his disciples something that we should always remember. The harvest truly is plenteous, but the workers are few. And we know that's true even this afternoon.

If we talk about the spiritual needs of people, we need workers to go and reach those needs. If we're going to talk about the physical needs, we need even more workers. If we want those workers, we must give prayer a greater priority in our lives.

The problems that we are talking about this afternoon as we look out across the world are so overwhelming. The problem of poverty. The problem of refugees.

Twenty million in the world today. The problem of people starving. Millions headed in Africa especially for starvation.

The problem of AIDS. The problem of injustice and the manipulation of the poor. Much less the problem of housing.

And hundreds of millions have no homes in the world today. The problem of children. As a hundred million children are suffering at least in the world today in poverty and in child labor.

And on and on we could go. I personally find it almost totally overwhelming. I feel so small and so weak.

I feel that OM even with 2000 full-time people is just so small and so weak in comparison to the task. So I'm driven to my knees at the foot of the cross to believe that prayer is the greatest answer to the challenge that we are facing in the world today. And it was the Lord himself who after describing the need said pray.

Pray. And it was the Lord himself who after describing the need said pray. Pray.

I don't know how your churches are doing in the area of prayer but in many of our churches in England I now live in London, England I'm not there very much but that's where my nest is. And as we go to the churches we find so many have hardly any kind of prayer ministry. Some Christians today don't even seem to understand what you're talking about when you talk about spiritual warfare and prayer and intercession and all that kind of thing.

As a church if we are going to respond to the physical needs of those around us we must remember those words in Corinthians that say the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but are mighty unto God to the pulling down of strongholds. And we must remember these words that we have just read from Matthew 9, 36 and 37 Harvest, verse 37 is plenteous but the workers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest.

He will send out labors into the harvest. I'm sure there are many of you I've never had the privilege of meeting before Many of you have come to Christ only in recent years And tonight I'm going to share my testimony of how a woman who believed this vision, this passage was used of God to pray me into the kingdom of the Lord. But I want us to go on now to the book of Acts to get a glimpse of the Church attempting to put into practice these basic teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ We have a tremendous picture of the Church in the book of Acts, chapter 2 as we see the Church in action And verses 41 through

47 should be studied by every believer The book of Acts makes it very clear that the priority for every believer is to live the Christian life and to proclaim the gospel To live the Christian life and to proclaim the gospel To live the Christian life and to proclaim the gospel And we see that again and again and again And as they were preaching the gospel we read of, in verse 41 3,000 people coming to Jesus And then we see the basics of Church life being set down But Singh of India a man who now is very, very ill and dying He came to Paris I believe many years ago The greatest church planter in modern India Over 500 churches I fellowshiped and preached in many churches in many of those churches all over India when I lived there And he said verse 42 represents the four pillars of the Church Look at those four pillars We are steadfast in the apostles' doctrine And brothers and sisters doctrine is important I'm very concerned about the lack of emphasis on truth in the day and age in which we live We hear a lot of preaching about love And I love to preach about love I believe love is the greatest aim of every Christian Some of you have read my books where I'm often talking about that But where do we find out about the revolutionary message of love?

Where do we find out? How do we know that this is a priority? How do we know this is on the heart of Jesus Christ?

We know from looking into the Bible So we can never separate love and truth The great truth of the Bible is about love But the Bible has many other truths about the judgment of God about holiness And this is why we want to always in our churches declare as much as we can the whole counsel of God So here are the four pillars of Acts 2.42 The apostles' doctrine Number two, fellowship And we hope we're going to have wonderful fellowship during these days together Number three is the breaking of bread which also speaks of worship And number four is prayer Every believer and every work of God must build on those four foundational pillars Verse 43 tells us of many wonderful things happening It does say these things were done by the apostles I don't believe every young new Christian is sort of

out doing this kind of miracle And it's interesting those who often would like to see greater miracles They're not willing for the rest of the passage Those that would like to see three thousand souls saved like verse 41 Get a bit confused when they get to verse 45 Look at verse 45 if you want a very unpleasant verse for the modern era They sold their possessions and goods and part of them to all men as every man had need When I was a young Christian especially in the states and began to preach this verse I got in a lot of trouble I discovered American Christians do not believe this verse They told me this is communism And they tried this communism in the New Testament And it didn't work So that verse is no longer applicable to us in the modern era especially in the United States where we

like to buy everything we can possibly buy even when we don't need it But I don't think this was some kind of communism Though not every single thing taught by communism was wrong But I believe we see these people responding in compassion to practical problems among God's people And they were responding to the situation that they were in And so they sold some of their possessions And they did some distribution And it's a very very joyful experience When I began to discover this in the Word of God I had a tendency to be a little extreme I not only sold all my possessions I started to sell other people's possessions And I had to be careful And to try to find a balance I especially got excited when I found Luke 14.33 My tendency when I found a verse that just seemed so powerful was to just

jump on that verse without looking at any other verses So you can imagine what happened in my life when I bumped across Luke 14.33 So likewise, whosoever he is of you that forsaketh not all that he has cannot be my disciple And he who does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple And if some of

you remember O.M. in the very early days You know we were known as a movement that was forsaking all We discovered of course there was a lot more to true spirituality than just forsaking possessions We discovered it was harder to forsake the self-life much harder than to forsake some camera that you never knew how to operate anyway And at times in O.M. we proved that the self-life could exist in any environment even sleeping on the floor the self-life could be very much alive And we

realized more and more that the Christian life is not firstly outward things there are outward things it's not firstly outward exterior things like neckties it's the interior thing And as we look out of the suffering people in the world Many of us don't have much money Many of us are already extreme in the way we give and in the way we live and it's offending other people at times But at least we can let our hearts be broken Even as we saw these slides before this message Just to see those pictures And the many pictures we often see on television It should break our hearts I want to ask you my friends Has your heart been broken for the poor and the suffering people of this world What about the poor people right here in Paris They are being persecuted right here in this great city that

stood so much at one time for democracy Let us remember those very strong words from 1st John chapter 3 not the gospel of John but 1st John chapter 3 And verse 16 Many people know John 3.16 But I hardly know anybody that knows 1st John 3.16 Where we have this beautiful picture of our Christian faith By this perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren That is one of the strongest verses in the whole Bible That's the whole Christian message The first part is what Christ has done for us He gave his life for us We praise him We break bread to remember that But the second part cannot be left out The Bible isn't like going to your favorite little cafeteria restaurant to choose what food you want to eat We had such a big

meal at the OM headquarters before coming here They put a tomato on my plate filled with all kinds of nice things And then some bread And I thought that is enough And I was eating this and ready to go And then Brother Danny O'Mah sitting next to me started to give French orientation lessons He said Brother George meat is coming Then vegetables came Then potatoes came And then cheese came Then ice cream came It's a miracle I was even able to get here after eating that food But that is very small compared to some restaurants And now so many people like to go to these big restaurants where you can pick and choose Now I must confess I did something I would never do in the early days of OM I chose to eat what was inside the tomato but I didn't eat the tomato I didn't have any more room for

this big tomato bigger than my head But Brother Danny the Bible is so big that it is not some kind of cafeteria we go and pick the verses or even parts of the verses that we like So we must take that second part of 1 John chapter 3 And we must be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren That's the kind of biblical commitment we need as we rush toward the 21st century This is reinforced by verse 17 and verse 18 Whosoever hath this world's good sees his brother have need shutteth up his compassion from him How dwelleth the love of God in him That is very strong teaching And look at verse 18 My little children let us not love in word neither in tongue but in deed and in truth My little children let us not love in word neither in tongue but in deed and in truth This is a very clear

teaching of Scripture We are to be concerned about the suffering people in the world in which we live Now when we begin to think this way we begin to pray this way we begin to take action There will be problems And Satan will counter-attack us One of the things Satan especially tries to do He will say as you perhaps give some money to help famine relief in Africa Satan will say that's such a small amount of money that doesn't mean anything And often we do feel that what we are doing is so small But can you imagine what

the world would be like if everybody just began to think that way that what they are going to do is so small they might as well not do anything The very fiber of our society would collapse and we would find ourselves in a living hell Last summer we had three or four

thousand young people at the Love Europe Congress over in Germany They didn't have very much money They had to pay to get there Many of them were students But God broke our hearts over those who were suffering without food in Africa And so we took an offering among those young people And we must have seen over 200,000 francs equivalent French francs collected from those young people And some of it went to Somalia Some went to Eritrea Some went to Sudan And I believe there are people alive today who would be dead by now because those young people said Yes, this little bit we have we give it unto Jesus The word of God says so clearly it is more blessed to give than receive We read that in the word of God We sing about it in our songs We preach about it How many of us are experiencing that?

Greater joy giving away money than receiving money I personally must confess when people give me money I experience a great joy In most cases I'm just channeling that on to India or to the Muslim world But in order to give it I have to receive it And so it's a joy to receive funds But it is a greater joy to give it How sad it is under the pressure of our materialistic society that many of God's people do not know the reality of hilarious giving to the Lord and for the poor and for world evangelism There's also the temptation to think, oh well we can't do very much in our church we're already over committed we're already giving too much I want to challenge you about something It's called sanctified imagination Let's see how that comes out in French I have to tell you what I've told people

all over the world I don't speak French But it's my favorite language You don't have to understand it It just sounds so good So nice sounding Compared to these languages where you always feel someone is about to spit at you I wish I could start over again and learn French Brothers and sisters we must become more serious about the word of God Let our sanctified imagination think of new ways and new ideas that we can raise money that we can find money that we can release money for the poor and the suffering and the un-evangelized in the world today When I was saved I didn't have very much My father from the Netherlands He was a poor man He went to America, he worked very hard But he couldn't give me too much So I went into business when I was about 14 I must confess I had a passion to make

money When I was saved in that Billy Graham meeting that I'll talk about tonight Very very shortly after that I realized the most important thing in the world was to take the gospel to everybody on planet earth as quickly as possible And I soon sold those little businesses And I bought a few Christian books Just a few Christian books Went door to door selling those Christian books And putting the profit into world missions Just like the loaves and the fishes I gave God that little bit of money I got a hold of those few books like seeds, planting seeds in people's lives And Operation Mobilization was born Which has given the word of God to 500 million people face to face in this world We may only have a little bit like the loaves and the fishes But when we give it to Jesus He multiplies

Your church may be only a small congregation Maybe you're having trouble paying the electric bill But as you have commitment and zeal and love and sanctified imagination He will lead you into new and greater ways to help the poor and to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ We later find in the book of Acts a character named Barnabas And we find this situation where they were actually selling a piece of land Think of how much land many of God's people are sitting on As if they're going to take it to heaven And soon they're gone They're standing before Jesus Christ And usually the government taxes and all that takes most of the land Let's just look at that passage in chapter 4 Verse 34 Neither was there any among

them that lacked for as many as were possessors of lands and houses sold

them and brought the price of those things that were sold And laid them down at the apostles' feet and distribution was made unto every man according to as he had need And there was a man named Joseph surnamed Barnabas He was to be one of the great men of God What happened to him?

Verse 37 Having land He sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet This Christianity that we have come to believe is perhaps a little more revolutionary than we first thought Maybe you thought it was just sort of personal salvation so at the end of your life you didn't have to go to hell And forgive us even when we preach that that is sort of the whole message And we must be careful when we preach that that is not the whole message Because Christian life is not just a salvation that pulls us out of hell but it is a salvation that pulls us out of ourselves From our selfish tendency to take care of ourselves and not worry about other people who are poor and suffering and in horrible, terrible situations in the world today Sometimes the way we live as far as our money

and our houses we really aren't any different than the unconverted person Of course on Sundays we are different On Sundays we go to church we put our neckties on and we sing to Jesus and we praise the Lord and we dedicate our lives and we love Him and we do anything for You, Lord Jesus But already by Sunday afternoon it's a little difficult to tell the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian It's not enough just to believe on Him We must live even as He lived And that will mean our hearts will be broken for the poor and for the suffering And though we may not be able to do much and we have to learn God's theology of limitations or we can get into tremendous foolishness and we'll have to be reminded that this treasure is in earthen vessels but even with those things in mind

there's so much we can do to love the poor to help the suffering to go to this world in which we live with gospel tracts in one hand and with food or clothing or medicine or whatever else we may need in that other hand It's a two-handed gospel They are together Our acts of love and mercy and giving and the proclamation of the message of salvation and praise God for the results taking place around the world as God's people become more biblical in their evangelism and in their ministries God bless you as you follow this biblical path Let us pray Our God and Father we thank you for the power of your Holy Word We're aware that we're not here to listen to the philosophy of man but we're here to receive truth from your Holy Word and Lord as we study these many passages of Scripture help us to

take the necessary steps of faith and obedience and brokenness to be your men and to be your women to go where you want us to go and to do what you want us to do and we'll give you all the praise and all the glory through Jesus Christ our Lord and our Savior Amen We're going to take song number 26 on your sheets Jesus entrusts you a work of love useful and blessed until his return this holy task do you want to accomplish it for him without reluctance without ever weakening there is always a danger in these songs where we address someone else is not to feel concerned and to sing for the neighbor but I don't think that's the goal of the author I think we could put behind this Jesus entrusts you a work of love simply hear God who speaks to us personally and he is waiting for our answer so

let's try to sing it in this perspective not for our neighbor or else let's not forget that he sings for us too isn't it? and the solution would be to turn one to the other to sing this song but I think the best solution is to hear the voice of God himself telling us go sing the grace go to the youth go to those who are dying pray, act day after day Jesus entrusts you a work of love may he be blessed until his return this task do you want to accomplish for him without reluctance without ever weakening pray, act day after day may nothing tire you

to be a good start on the list of true fights of endless tours far from true happiness say to those who pray

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