



## A Poverty of Celebration

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)*

Poor Africa! So much suffering, hunger, drought, corruption, HIV and AIDS and the list goes on. Poor Africa!

We may have pictures of exotic safaris to the Serengeti, romantic evenings in Zanzibar or the majestic snows of Kilimanjaro. Yet, it is difficult to visualize Africa without a vivid reminder of poverty. Poor Africa.

And poverty there is; the per capita income in Kenya is a few dollars a day, and that is only for the fortunate who find work. Poverty is on a scale that most in the so-called developed world cannot imagine. It is ugly poverty that destroys both body and spirit.

However, there is another kind of poverty in Africa. Matthew refers to it as the "poor in spirit." This is not poverty of the purse, but poverty of the being. This is the kind of poor that involves an anxious need for God. It calls for simplicity of life, which leads to a confidence in God. It is an absence of pride and the constant need of possession or place. It is the kind of poverty that does not destroy nor deprive, but builds up and brings abundance of life. This is a poverty that uplifts both body and spirit. It is a poverty of celebration. This is a beautiful poverty.

These are not just words, for daily we see the richness of this poverty in the songs of the women, the smiles of the children, the devotion of men and the faith of all.

As missionaries we are called to do all we can to ease the ugly poverty but we are truly blessed and enriched to witness the beautiful poor.



*Pastor Sam and Cindy Wolff, ELCA missionaries in Kenya, meet with Masai church elders. The Masai community, dependent on its cattle, has been particularly impacted by devastating drought, as cattle have perished by the masses.*



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