

## **“It’s a Rich Man’s World?”**

A HEDGE fund trader and former treasurer of the Conservative Party was the guest speaker at the 70th - and possibly final - Reading Churches Men’s Breakfast on Saturday, February 13. About 100 men attended the event, held at Reading Blue Coat School. After a full English breakfast, the men gathered together to hear Lord Michael Farmer speak on the theme “It’s a Rich Man’s World?” It was both an exploration of the love of money over the love of Christ and a personal testimony.

Lord Farmer opened his talk by exploring whether money makes the world go round. “With wealth”, he said, “you can get whatever you want - money gives you the freedom to do what you want”, citing larger houses and holidays as many people’s aspirations, while also reminding people that wealthy people from other countries such as Russia and China were buying properties in London as “it’s the place to be for the world’s people”. “It does seem to be a rich man’s world,” he said, adding a ‘but’ ...reminding the audience that even the world’s richest people, like Steve Jobs, left everything behind when they died. “Dust to dust,” he said. “We’re here for four score years or so, then gone ... dust to dust. It’s not a rich man’s world, it’s God’s world!”

Michael then explored Scriptures that help us understand this, including Genesis 1 where we learn of how we became separated from God and expelled from the Garden of Eden. This led to him sharing his personal story, which included a difficult upbringing with an alcoholic father. “Life’s been such a struggle,” he said. “Life’s a struggle for each one of us.” Despite this, he reminded the audience that God entered into the world in the form of Jesus. “God came into our presence, came into our world in the form of Jesus, son of man, son of God. All the time [Jesus lived on earth] he was teaching about Him, about the Kingdom of God, Here we have a man coming on earth, to become the cost for us - Christ redeemed us by becoming a curse for us, a curse by hanging on a tree.” Then he talked from Mark 10, the famous passages about what a rich man must do to enter into the Kingdom of heaven and reminding us that we must have a childlike faith. “Children are trusting and dependent. That’s how we come to God. Not good works, it’s important to come as a little child.”

Michael became a Christian when he was 35, something he said that “gave him purpose in the world”. Over time, he realised that he had to be open about his faith within his role in the City, even though at times it felt difficult or the wrong thing to do.

“When you have the revelation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, it changes everything,” he said. “You need to take that seriously.”

Encouraging men at the breakfast to be open about their faith he challenged them: “Men in business - the Lord will stand with you. If you keep your head below the parapet no-one will know [Jesus].”

Michael also talked about how his faith has sustained him through difficult times in the City, citing a time when a hedge fund he was managing - worth £2.7bn - was attacked by another. In

a few weeks it had lost 30% of its value and he was having sleepless nights over it until he was reminded of the Apostle Paul when he wrote about having a thorn in his side.

He explained: "Christ's strength is shown through my weakness. It was keeping me humble. It's hugely important to be kept humble. It was an interesting lesson on how much God loves us."

Michael concluded by talking once again about our lives being finite on earth.

He said: "There is a realisation of the reality of eternity. When that reality dawns on us, all I can do is fall on my face. It's a gift from the human race, and has to be accepted."

Thanking Michael Farmer after the talk, John Ledger said that he was grateful for him "telling us about his early life. We could assume [because he was a peer] he'd been born with a silver spoon in his mouth! It has been really challenging this morning and done in such a way we have to go away and think about it. I appreciate that."

John then went on to talk about the men's breakfast group itself which had started in 1994. He said. "The largest attendance we had was for Jackie Pullinger from Hong Kong with 350 people - had we had a bigger venue we could have had 500 that morning. The breakfasts have helped men grow and understand the Christian faith, but we're disappointed that more younger men haven't come, although it's good to see some here today. We're not getting younger men joining the planning team - we need people that will volunteer to come and carry on the work, or sadly this will be the last breakfast. Yet I still believe there is a need for such breakfasts."

He also thanked those who had helped him organise the breakfasts over the past 22 years for without their hard work and support we would not have kept going.

"If anyone in the younger generation would be able to put in the work, energy and vision to carry this on, please contact me." (Contact via: [enquiries@rcmg.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@rcmg.org.uk))