

## World Food Day

Scriptures:

John 6:1-14

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

### Food For Thought

**Reader 1 (Wilf):** “For hunger is a curious thing: at first it is with you all the time, walking and sleeping and in your dreams, and your belly cries out insistently, and there is a gnawing and a pain as if your very vitals were being devoured, and you must stop it at any cost and you buy a moment’s respite even when you know and fear the sequel. Then the pain is no longer sharp but dull, and this too is with you always, so that you think of food many times a day and each time a terrible sickness assails you, and because you know this you try to avoid the thought, but you cannot for it is with you. Then that too is gone, all pain, all desire, only a great emptiness is left, like the sky, like a well in drought and it is now that the strength drains from your limbs and you try to rise and find you cannot, or to swallow water your throat is powerless, and both the swallow and the effort of retaining the liquid tax you to the uttermost.” (Kamala Markandaya)

**Response (People):** "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Isaiah 58:6." Forgive us Lord for our acts of omission.

**Karen:** In our Judeo-Christian tradition, food and hunger are central themes throughout the Biblical narrative, from Joseph’s control of the land and people of Egypt and Canaan through famine (Genesis 47:13-21) to the sharing together of early Christians (Acts 2:44-47). “Give us this day our daily bread” is a petition repeated by many Christians around the world every day as they pray the Lord’s Prayer.

There is currently enough to feed all in the world but hunger is a matter of injustice. Small-scale farms and women farmers, who produce over 90 percent of the continent’s food supply, are the most affected by hunger and malnutrition. Thousands of people have been evicted from their lands without consultation or compensation, so that the land can be sold or leased for profit.

Let us listen to some of the voices of hunger.

**(Carol T.)** Sometimes I feel like I am invisible. People see me, but they don’t want to see me and so they look through me before they look at me. I wish they would just look at me. **Woman from Pakistan**

(Kelvin) My mom said that I couldn't call her when I am sick at school because if she doesn't go to work then she doesn't get her cheque and then we can't get enough groceries that week and I don't get a lunch. That's why I'm staying in the sick room at school today. **8-year-old child, Canada**

(Maureen) If sometimes our poor people have had to die of starvation, it is not that God didn't care for them. It is because you and I didn't give, were not an instrument of love to give them that bread, to give them that clothing. It is because we did not recognise him, when he came in distressing disguise, in the hungry man, in the lonely man, in the homeless child and seeking for shelter. **Mother Teresa**

(Vicki) My husband and I could no longer feed all of our children, so you see here, my daughter, the youngest. We have had to choose not to feed her. We cannot feed her anymore and so she will die. **Mother from Bangladesh**

(Karen) **GOD'S STORY (excerpted from Matthew 25:34 ff.)**

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food.

I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me.

I was in prison and you came to visit me.

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or saw you thirsty and gave you something to drink?"

And the King will reply, "Even as you did it to the least of these members of my family, so you did it for me."

Even with over six billion people on the planet, hunger is no more inevitable than it is justifiable. There is more than enough food grown today for everyone to have enough. Yet chronic hunger persists in the lives of over 800 million people.

God's promised provision is tied to action. From the very first chapters of the Old Testament, where God places Adam and Eve in the Garden with an abundance of food and tells them to replenish the earth and take care of it, to the feeding of the five thousand in the New Testament. We just heard the story where a small boy's faith and willingness to share creates a miracle, God uses people to provide.

Things worked out with manna as long as people didn't lose faith in God's provision and resort to hoarding. God's economy is defined by the promise of abundance in the context of faithfulness. From a Christian faith perspective, scarcity is a human construct and part of the human horizon of action.

Abundance or scarcity? God's way or ours? It seems it is up to us to decide.

**(Ken) A story from a Canadian city** We live in an area with a lot of mixed income levels. When a new family moved in next door, there were children who began to come over to our home quite frequently. When it became apparent that people in the home were abusing drugs, Child and Family Services took the kids, but returned them the next day. One boy, who was 11, was often in charge of his two younger siblings, and sometimes he would leave them in the park, or they would start fires in garbage cans. One day, he came to our home when we were having a barbecue and asked if he and his sisters could eat with us, as no one had been home for the past two days and there was no food in the house. We let them stay—what else could we do? The next day the mother came home and they all moved out. Someone else moved into the house, but I have never forgotten that little boy

**(Louise) A story from Canada**

The real effect of poverty is long term. You slowly wear out your clothes, you put off getting a hair-cut, the unvaried diet makes you pasty and any emergency need for funds is a problem. Your morale comes under pressure as well and after months of failing to get jobs (I was turned down once for McDonald's in the early '90s), despair kicks in. I have found it a truism that would-be employers don't like the whiff of desperation. If you say you'll do anything, and sound like you mean it, no one will give you anything. (And lest you are inclined to think I am, or was, a slacker, I have worked at everything from picking up rocks on a farm, store setup, painting, moving and yard work to typing.) It's not so hard to live in poverty for a brief period, or so long as hope holds up. It's when it looks like a long grey future that it drains all colour from your life.  
Ian Welsh

Here are some Hunger Facts:

**(Carol G.)**

- U.N. studies show that the world already produces more than enough food to feed everyone on the planet and has the capacity to produce even more, and yet...World hunger organisations estimate that nearly 1 BILLION people around the world are chronically hungry.
- 25,000 children die every day of hunger or diseases resulting from hunger.
- Every six seconds a child dies because of hunger and related causes. (*Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), 2004*)
- 65 percent of the world's hungry live in seven countries: India, China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and Ethiopia. (*FAO, 2008*)
- In 2010, 17.2 million households, 14.5 percent of households (approximately one in seven), were food insecure, the highest number ever recorded in the United States

**(Karen)**

- 13 million children in the U.S. go to bed hungry. (*Bread for the World, 2004*)
- Around the world the most vulnerable to hunger are: children, pregnant and nursing women, single mothers, the elderly, the homeless, the unemployed, ethnic and racial minorities, and the working poor.
- The gap between the rich and the rest is growing ever wider -- with the chasm increasing at a faster pace in Canada than in the United States. That's the conclusion of a Conference Board

of Canada study Tuesday, which says income inequality has been rising more rapidly in Canada than in the U.S. since the mid-1990s.

So What needs to change?

The causes of chronic hunger are complex and many are deeply enmeshed in international and national politics and economics. However, there are some clear principles that can make a huge difference:

Firstly, we need to go back to the basics of our Christian tradition and listen to the lessons of today. Share, Care, Support one another. Believe you have enough to offer whether it be support in kindness, food, money, work...

Love your neighbour as yourself. And remember everyone is a child of God - created equal.

There are many opinions of how to assist here are only a few:

We need to promote “agro-ecological” approaches to farming that respect ecological diversity and with which farmers can attain sustainable food security and eliminate or minimise their dependency on expensive artificial inputs, handouts and food aid.

We need to press governments to respect and implement, through policies and practice, the right of all people to be able to access adequate food rather than face hunger or be dependent in the long term on aid.

Each of us should examine the food we eat, and, if we have a choice, to try to ensure that what we eat is sustainable and healthy – for us and for the planet.

God’s perspective on hunger does not change over time, but human perspective does. We live in a shrinking and ever-more-interdependent world. Whether we look at the labels on our clothes, the globalization of communication and markets, the effect of farm subsidies in Europe and the US on Canadian and developing world farmers, multi-national peacekeeping, or surfing the world wide web, our lives are touched by people, events and ideas that originate far from our homes and borders. And we in turn affect the lives of people far away. This reality has a lot of implications for Christians.

General William Booth wrote: While women weep, as they do now, I’ll fight; while children go hungry, as they do now I’ll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I’ll fight; while there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I’ll fight— I’ll fight to the very end!

There are many reasons for these facts - A few of them are:

Lack of education, Low paying or lack of work, War, injustice, greed, Ignorance (whose?) Neglect of scripture, Racism, racial differences, Gender inequalities, Immigration, Destructive personal habits, Disabilities, Natural disasters

I could go on and on and on with facts that I studied in the last week (believe me it’s hard to stop). But I want to turn to our purpose of the day. We are called by God to live differently. One

of the things I appreciate about the idea of “Occupy Wall street” and “Occupy Canada which has now begun is it is a movement that is saying it’s time to live differently. It’s time to change our focus from greed and consumerism to connection, equality, living together in harmony.

Max Lucado wrote, I choose kind- ness...I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

Most of us here live in relative abundance. Others of us fit into the categories of these facts I have stated today. So how then shall we live? What are we called to?

Henri J. M. Nouwen wrote Gratitude ... goes beyond the “mine” and “thine” and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift. In the past I always thought of gratitude as a spontaneous response to the awareness of gifts received, but now I realize that gratitude can also be lived as a discipline. The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.

Living in a broken and sinful world, wherein we see hunger all around, our immediate response as compassionate people of faith is to offer food. Thus, while we provide food to those who are in immediate and dire need, we must simultaneously work to expose and eradicate the causes of hunger, much of which results directly from actions of the rulers and authorities (Ephesians 6:12) and the structures and systems they create and control.

As the young boy with a loaf of bread and a few fish we are called to give of our gifts that our world might be changed.

I’m going to invite you to pray a different kind of prayer with me now. This is one of my favourite current songs. Hugh also sent it to me recently and as I was writing this sermon I knew it was time to use it. (*I made a video on poverty and hunger and played the song “Today I’m Gonna Try and Change the World” Johnny Reid*)

As you are listening pray asking How then shall we live? How can I live in a way that changes our world.