

Hunger International Justice Series

Text: What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith from my works. - James 2:14-18 HCSB

Issues: hunger / famine; population increase

Image of dying child



Introduction

1. More than 852 million people in the world went hungry in 2002. In developing countries, 6 million children die each year, mostly from hunger related causes. (U.N Millennium Project Hunger Task Force 2005)
2. In the United States, 36 million people, including 13 million children, live in households where individuals have to skip meals or eat less to make food last longer. That means that 1 in 10 households is living in hunger or is at risk of hunger. (ERS Research Brief, Economic Research Service, October 2004)
3. Child poverty is more widespread in the United States than in any other industrialized country yet our government does less than any other industrialized country to combat it. (Marc Cohen, *What Government Can do: Hunger 1997*; Bread for the World Institute.)
4. While the United Nations estimates that the basic health and nutritional needs of the world's poorest people could be met for an additional \$13 billion a year, year after year they continue to starve. Meanwhile U.S. and European animal lovers spend more than that each year on food for their pets.

Image of 30 million slide

Thirty million people a year
DIE of HUNGER
Thirty million people a year
DIE of HUNGER
Thirty million people a year
DIE of HUNGER

Image of 3.6 slide

Every 3.6 seconds a person
dies of hunger
75%
of them are children

We must change our priorities. God is deeply concerned about the issue of hunger.

- Psalms 146:5-8 HCSB Happy is the one whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, 6 the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them. He remains faithful forever, 7 executing justice for the exploited and giving food to the hungry. The LORD frees prisoners. 8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD raises up those who are oppressed. The LORD loves the righteous.
- Proverbs 14:31 HCSB The one who oppresses the poor insults their Maker, but one who is kind to the needy honors Him.
- Proverbs 28:27 HCSB The one who gives to the poor will not be in need, but one who turns his eyes away will receive many curses.

- Isaiah 25:4-6 HCSB For You have been a stronghold for the poor, a stronghold for the humble person in his distress, a refuge from the rain, a shade from the heat. When the breath of the violent is like rain against a wall, 5 like heat in a dry land, You subdue the uproar of barbarians. As the shade of a cloud cools the heat of the day, so He stills the song of the violent. 6 The LORD of Hosts will prepare a feast for all the peoples on this mountain--a feast of aged wine, choice meat, finely aged wine.
- Matthew 6:11 HCSB Give us today our daily bread.

Image of huge wheat piles



Hunger does not exist in the world because the world doesn't produce enough food – we possess the ability to feed the entire world right now. Less than 1% of what the US spends every year on its military budget would easily cover the expense. What is lacking is a just and equitable distribution.

We cannot wait for the government to solve the problem. In our system of government the president is elected for four years. If he is reelected he can serve at most eight years. During this time he must constantly keep one eye on justice and the other on the fluttering polls. Our system is hardwired for shortsightedness. It can think at most in 8 year increments and must try to never ask too much of those on whose votes they count. As if that is not enough, the huge war chests needed to get elected mean that our government takes office already beholden to huge corporations and individual wealthy donors. But God says,

- Exodus 23:6 HCSB "You must not deny justice to the poor among you in his lawsuit.
- Leviticus 19:15 HCSB "You must not act unjustly when rendering judgment. Do not be partial to the poor or give preference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly.

Besides, God didn't call the government to deal with hunger.

God called each individual righteous person to do what they can.

- Deuteronomy 14:28-29 HCSB "At the end of every three years, bring a tenth of all your produce for that year and store it within your gates. 29 Then the Levite, who has no portion or inheritance among you, the foreign resident, fatherless, and widow within your gates may come, eat, and be satisfied. And the LORD your God will bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.
- Deuteronomy 15:11 HCSB For there will never cease to be poor people in the land; that is why I am commanding you, 'You must willingly open your hand to your afflicted and poor brother in your land.'
- Psalms 112:5 HCSB Good will come to a man who lends generously and conducts his business fairly.

Care for the poor and equitable distribution of goods was the hallmark of the early church.

- Acts 4:32-35 HCSB Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them. 34 For there was not a needy person among them, because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet. This was then distributed to each person as anyone had a need.

God has called the church to care for the hungry and she has appointed deacons to be in charge of that effort.

- Acts 6:1-4 HCSB In those days, as the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. 2 Then the Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching about God to wait on tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the preaching ministry."

We must by faith switch to an economy of grace.

- Proverbs 11:24-26 HCSB One person gives freely, yet gains more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor. 25 A generous person will be enriched, and the one who gives a drink of water will receive water. 26 People will curse anyone who hoards grain, but a blessing will come to the one who sells it.
- Proverbs 22:16 HCSB Oppressing the poor to enrich oneself, and giving to the rich--both lead only to poverty.

We must recognize the worshipful aspect of care for the hungry.

- Isaiah 58:6-10 HCSB Isn't the fast I choose: To break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and to not ignore your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will appear like the dawn, and your recovery will come quickly. Your righteousness will go before you, and the LORD's glory will be your rear guard. 9 At that time, when you call, the LORD will answer; when you cry out, He will say: Here I am. If you get rid of the yoke from those around you, the finger-pointing and malicious speaking, 10 and if you offer yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted one, then your light will shine in the darkness, and your night will be like noonday.
- Ezekiel 18:5-7 HCSB "Now suppose a man is righteous and does what is just and right: 6 He does not eat at the mountain shrines or raise his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife or come near a woman during her menstrual impurity. 7 He doesn't oppress anyone but returns his collateral to the debtor. He does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing.
- Matthew 19:21 HCSB "If you want to be perfect," Jesus said to him, "go, sell your belongings and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me."

We must be careful to seek their good rather than our advancement. We must not be like the wealthy socialites who will have big dinners to be seen by the glitterati but would never think to serve at the local soup kitchen.

- Matthew 6:1-4 HCSB "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of people, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 So whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. I assure you: They've got their reward! 3 But when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
- Luke 14:12-14 HCSB He also said to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or your rich

neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. 13 On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Care for the poor and hungry is a critical characteristic by which we can determine whether or not we have saving faith.

- Matthew 25:31-46 HCSB "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you took care of Me; I was in prison and you visited Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or without clothes and clothe You? 39 When did we see You sick, or in prison, and visit You?' 40 "And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.' 41 Then He will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels! 42 For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger and you didn't take Me in; I was naked and you didn't clothe Me, sick and in prison and you didn't take care of Me.' 44 "Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me either.' 46 "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."
- James 1:27 HCSB Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.
- James 2:14-18 HCSB What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can his faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith from my works.

Care for our hungry neighbor illustrates our commitment to following God's greatest command.

- Mark 12:31 HCSB "The second is: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."
- Romans 13:9 HCSB The commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment--all are summed up by this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

It demonstrates where our hearts truly lie.

- Luke 12:32-34 HCSB Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for

yourselves that won't grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- John 15:13 HCSB No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends.

It was the Samaritan's personal investment of care, time, money and goods that earned him the title "good."

- Luke 10:25-37 HCSB Just then an expert in the law stood up to test Him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 "What is written in the law?" He asked him. "How do you read it?" 27 He answered: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. 28 "You've answered correctly," He told him. "Do this and you will live." 29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus took up the question and said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion. 34 He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him. When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.' 36 "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 "The one who showed mercy to him," he said. Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

We must give from our hearts, not out of a sense of obligation.

- Luke 11:39-42 HCSB But the Lord said to him: "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and evil. 40 Fools! Didn't He who made the outside make the inside too? 41 But give to charity what is within, and then everything is clean for you. 42 "But woe to you Pharisees! You give a tenth of mint, rue, and every kind of herb, and you bypass justice and love for God. These things you should have done without neglecting the others.
- 1 Corinthians 13:3 HCSB And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing.
- 2 Corinthians 9:7 HCSB Each person should do as he has decided in his heart--not out of regret or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.

We shouldn't be daunted by the enormity of the task. We are a people who act from faith in Jesus Christ, from the conviction of things not seen. We do what we do, not because we are convinced that it will solve every problem, but because it is the right thing to do.

- Hebrews 11:1-2 HCSB Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. 2 For by it our ancestors were approved.

Feeding the hungry gives us a perfect opportunity to present people with the advantages of being acquainted with the Bread of Life.

- John 6:33-35 HCSB For the bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said, "Sir, give us this bread always!" 35 "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again.

- John 6:48 HCSB I am the bread of life.
- John 6:51 HCSB I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."