
8th Sunday after Pentecost 2020

1 Corinthians 1:10-18 & Matthew 14:14-22

A simple test can determine whether someone is an optimist or a pessimist. Show them a glass of water half full. The pessimist will say the glass is half empty, the optimist half full. Our attitudes determine the way we look at reality.

Jesus never let negative thoughts or influences keep him from doing good. The disciples told Him to send the crowds home for something to eat. Jesus believed they could take care of the people. The positive way we look at things gets positive results. Matthew 14:13-21

In the earliest years of biblical history, during the time of nomads and tribes, poverty and hunger were not significant problems. Few lacked food, clothing, and shelter because the tribal leaders were capable and just. It was not until people settled in towns and villages that poverty made itself felt. At the time of Jesus, the problem of poverty became worse by the Roman occupation of Palestine. Jesus ministered to people who rarely had enough of anything.

Jesus' feeding of the five thousand shows His compassion for hungry people. While Jesus refused to use his miraculous powers to satisfy his hunger, he was actively concerned about the physical and material needs of other people. Here, Jesus took a little food and made it more than enough to feed several thousand.

Even though it looked like there was not enough food for everyone, Jesus provided enough food for them all. What a miraculous event! However, what often looks like a scarcity problem may be a different problem altogether. Today all the leading authorities tell us the primary cause of hunger in the world is not the inability to produce enough food for the global population. Hunger is an epidemic. The head of the United Nations food agency warned Tuesday that, as the world is dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, it is also "on the brink of a hunger pandemic" that could lead to "multiple famines of biblical proportions" within a few months if immediate action isn't taken.

World Food Program (WFP) Executive Director David Beasley told the UN Security Council that even before COVID-19 became an issue, he said to the world leaders that "2020 would be facing the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II." That is because of wars in Syria, Yemen and elsewhere, locust swarms in Africa, frequent natural disasters and economic crises in Lebanon, Congo, Sudan, and Ethiopia.

Beasley said, today 821 million people go to bed hungry every night all over the world. Also, 135 million people are facing "crisis levels of hunger or worse," and a new WFP analysis shows that because of COVID-19, an additional 130 million people "could be pushed to the brink of starvation by the end of 2020."

Starvation is happening because the world's more developed nations permit domestic politics to neglect humanitarian concerns and sound policy strategies. Our planet could provide for its inhabitants if it were not for the political problems that affect both production and distribution. Millions live at the edge of starvation, yet there is enough food for everyone.

God continues to provide in the biblical story. Creation is still productive, and God sometimes acts directly to provide for the Israelites, as in sending the manna in the wilderness. But sin causes us to hoard and fail to share. Some people tried to store the

manna in the desert, but the next day it stank and bred maggots. Our providing God gives us what we need one day at a time. The attempt to store resources rather than share them is a sign of our fallenness. God, the Creator, never intended for some of us to have too much while others have too little. Refusing to share is a critical element in world hunger today. "Why does God let there be hungry people in the world?" The right question is, "Why do we let there be hungry people in the world?" God intends for the bounty of creation to belong to all. East of Eden, we create systems that provide extravagance to some and nothing to others. Not caring is a sin. The fact is when everyone cares, we can end hunger.

Imagine yourself faced with the choice between great riches or righteous attitude. Which would you choose? Great wealth made no one happy for long, but the right attitude has brought happiness to princes and paupers. An excellent gift to have is a healthy, positive outlook on life. It can carry us through the bad times and the good. Nothing fuels the right attitude, like gratitude and praise to God.

Amen!