

Matthew 25:35-40

³⁵ I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was alone and away from home, and you invited me into your house. ³⁶ I was without clothes, and you gave me something to wear. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

³⁷ "Then the good people will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food? When did we see you thirsty and give you something to drink?' ³⁸ When did we see you alone and away from home and invite you into our house? When did we see you without clothes and give you something to wear?' ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and care for you?'

⁴⁰ "Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth. Anything you did for any of my people here, you also did for me.'

I wonder if any of us here know what hunger feels like.

What it is like to have nothing in the fridge. Nothing in the cupboard.

To wake up and there is no breakfast. There is no lunch and there is no dinner. Not be able to feed yourself, and not be able to feed your child.

On the Tearfund website it says:

Hunger is a thief. It robs people of their freedom, ruins their self-esteem and wrecks their dreams.

There are few words that I feel I can say when I come from such a privileged background on this topic. The concept of hunger is foreign to me. The concept of going without I have only encountered a handful of times. But this topic needs to be talked about.

I believe that there are 3 kinds of hunger. **Hunger of the stomach. Hunger of the mind. Hunger of the soul.**

Firstly Hunger of the stomach

When I hear about poverty, famine and starvation my mind can't really cope with it. I box it away, so as to protect myself from feeling guilty about what is going on in the world.

When I was in Djibouti with the ship I witnessed abject poverty but part of me had to shut down or I would have found it too overwhelming. My head and my heart could not cope with men, women and children fighting for the food that we put in the skip, nor with the image imprinted on my brain of a toddler ankle deep in mud, crying with hunger.

With figures in the world that currently state that 385 million children live in extreme poverty and that right on our door step:

- There are five council wards in the city where more than a quarter of children live in poverty, and in Northfield over a third of children are in poverty.
- Around 3,000 children in Aberdeen live in severe poverty – 9% of all children in the city.

I have now been working at Northfield Academy since the start of term and I have to say I am shocked and appalled at the difference living 8 miles across town can make, and really challenges me to think am I living out the passage we just heard?

Do I treat everyone I meet as if they were Christ himself?

Secondly Hunger of the mind

Now I in all honesty I can't truly relate to being food hungry, however the way Tearfund describes hunger struck me hard, as that is exactly how I would describe what depression feels like. It too is a thief, it robs people of their freedom, it ruins self-esteem and it wipes out any dreams.

There are many types of 'hunger' that can control the mind

- Anxiety, ADHD, Bipolar, Depression, Eating disorders, OCD, PTSD, Schizophrenia. But the one I know about is depression.

The majority of us here will know someone who has had their mind robbed by it, witnessed them become less and less of who they are as it saps ever once of freedom they once enjoyed.

Perhaps in Aberdeen it is easier to relate to this than that of the hunger of the stomach. One in four people in Scotland will experience some kind of mental health issue. This is the 'hunger' that is our reality.

I can't help but think that our passage relates to this so powerfully. It is just as much about physical hunger and need as it is about this new mental hunger we now face. After all it is about helping those in need, those we come across on a daily basis. God loves it when we pray, I'm all about the praying but... this passage it saying ACT!

Do something! Why...because you're doing it for Jesus.

Thirdly, Hunger of the soul

This is what Tearfund said about hunger:

Hunger is a thief. It robs people of their freedom, ruins their self-esteem and wrecks their dreams.

When we don't feed our souls is this not what happens? We lose our orientation our bearings our integrity and indeed our freedom.

Just like actual food we need it on a daily basis, we need food for our souls = soul food. As it says in the Psalms our souls thirst, they need living water.

Is not the devil described as a thief who wishes to keep us away from nourishment and green pastures. When our souls are weak because we have not fed them, we find it harder to fight off attacks or more worryingly at times we may not even notice we are under attack, because our souls have become so weak.

We have a song we sing here and there is a line that states "for it is only in your will that I am free" So to be truly free we need to know God's will.

I believe that our self-esteem comes from knowing that we are children of God and our dreams... with God our dreams can soar as with him all things are possible, are they not?

One of my favourite words ever is **shalom** it means peace or wholeness. In the OT the word shalom is used to describe a person who is whole and at peace in body, mind and spirit therefore whole.

Therefore:

- If you are stomach hungry, you do not have shalom
- If you are mind hungry, you do not have shalom
- If you are soul hungry, you do not have shalom

I think God knows that for many of us the problems of the world are seemingly overwhelming. So in his wisdom he has broken it down for us. In the passage that we have been looking at, we are not expected to go out and solve the world's problems all by ourselves.

God personalises the story by using I so that we can relate to it. He breaks it right down

I would like to read the passage again, this time put yourself in the story. Put your name where the I is.

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our house? When did we see you without clothes and give you something to wear? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and care for you?’

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God instructs us to take it step by step. Person by person. Moment by moment.

There is a story about a star fish that I think will help us understand this

There was a storm. And thousands and thousands of starfish were washed up on the shore. And there was this beautiful little girl was running down the beach and she was picking up the starfish, she was frantically throwing them back into the ocean. When I saw her doing this I said to her, 'Why are you doing that? You can only save a few before they die, what difference does it make?' And she looked at me and she said, 'To THAT one, it makes a difference.' To THAT one, it makes a difference, that little girl said. And she was right and at that very moment she was making a difference for that starfish and she was making a difference for herself too because she was connected, to that starfish. And that's what life is all about, connecting. In fact that's the only time you're ever alive, really, is when you're connecting.

Our passage today is all about connecting. We might not be able to solve the problems of the world, but we can help one person, we can make a difference in a life and to that person that is the their world. Regardless of the type of hunger we face or see other face:

- If it is a thief then we must lock it up
- If hunger robs freedom we must fight for their freedom
- If hunger ruins self-esteem then we must re-build people
- If hunger wrecks dreams we must allow dreaming once more

We are one body; one church. Together, we can share the gift of life and help people take back what any type of hunger has stolen.

"I tell you the truth. Anything you did for any of my people here, you also did for me.’

Shalom