

Worldwide Hunger. Some 795 million people in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy active life. That's about one in nine people on earth.

All of our hearts hurt when we see hunger and we recognize the suffering that physical hunger causes.

Here at Culpeper UMC, our church has risen up to help local hunger and physical needs such as participating in the USDA food distribution, serving at the Manna Ministry, Powerpack, a quarterly packing event to feed children in our community, Stephens Food Closet, Mission Hub for UMCOR and serving for two weeks a year at the Culpeper heating shelter, to name a few.

But there is another hunger among us that we might not recognize so easily. Spiritual hunger. In the midst of our serving and ministries, we can grow comfortable and not recognize the deep need all around us. Christ also had to remind his disciples.

We tend to focus on what we see, but spiritual hunger could affect all of eternity if the hungry are left to hunger. We might not recognize our own hunger and need of Christ ourselves.

This weekend, we explored several of the I AM statements of Christ and sought to understand what having our identity in Christ looks like through the I AM statements of Christ. We examined our hope and our sinful condition before a Holy God and restored our hope as the I AM statements of Christ revealed God's plan to meet our need.

And this morning, we culminate the Lenten retreat with the first I AM Statement of Christ: "I AM the Bread of Life" as we discover afresh how Christ truly does satisfy our deepest needs.

The setting for this statement of Christ, "I AM the Bread of Life" is perfect. The Passover was near. The Matzah bread was served at the Passover and was "unleavened" bread. Our Savior, aka "the Bread of Life" had not yet risen, either. The bread also symbolized the poor state God's people were in. They were hungry.

Jesus had just performed the miracle of feeding a large crowd of 5,000 who had gathered and were hungry. And that crowd's tummies got hungry again and there they were, looking for Jesus to fill them. Jesus had asked the disciples how they were going to feed such a large crowd the first time the crowd gathered. This time, as the crowd returned, Jesus shifts their conversation from physical hunger to spiritual hunger.

Did they see their need?

The people were still setting their hopes on a bread that they would eat and never go hungry. We don't much like being hungry. It's for the birds, right? Those poor birds.

I bet My husband must have felt as overwhelmed as the disciples at the prospect of feeding 5 children when he married me. But he chose to, anyway.

MAN VERSUS HUNGER

What is this relationship between man and his hunger?

1) Hunger humbles us and causes us to see our need.

We don't like to be dependent on others to meet our needs, but God is trying to get our attention so we will feed our hunger with the right antidote, which we find in Deuteronomy 8:3
Deuteronomy 8:3 "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

2) Hunger is never fully quenched because we were made for relationship.

Psalm 107:9 "For he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."

3) Man tries to fill his hunger on his own.

Psalm 81:10 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it."

4) Man tries to satisfy spiritual hunger in the flesh.

John 6:63 "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life."

How is Man's hunger resolved? A UNIQUE SOLUTION

Can you imagine standing before a bunch of hungry people and telling them what Christ did?

"Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst." John 6:35

Then Christ was telling them that if they ate his flesh they would never hunger again. The people around him said that this teaching was hard. I daresay it is hard for us today, too.

Christ was telling them to look past their physical hunger to see the hunger that affects more than just the here and now. We struggle with God's provision because we think it should look a certain way. Christ is calling us to trust Him to satisfy our deepest soul need and to stop trying to meet that needs with temporary measures. When we come to Christ with our hunger, He fills it.

How about you? Are you Hungry today? Are you Thirsty?

The woman at the well sought after the same thing – only she wanted to never thirst again. Christ saw the greater need – spiritual thirst. We have to have our hunger and thirst met by Jesus in order to be able to share it with others around us.

God wants to be known by us. He is so far above us, our minds are blown to try and fully comprehend Him, and yet we can know our Holy God. He revealed Himself to us in so many endless ways. As a King, as our Savior, as Emmanuel, God with us. As our Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. Christ reveals God the Father to us through parables and as we have been examining this weekend, through the I AM statements of Christ.

And When Christ said, “I AM the Bread of Life”, He revealed Himself as all we would ever need. He satisfies our souls completely. Are you hungry and thirsty today? Do you feel you never measure up? Christ is our sufficiency, friends. We are so easily satisfied with things that can’t satisfy, leaving us hungry and on a cycle to try and fill that void.

Jesus is the BREAD of life, offered for us. Like the manna in the desert that sustained God’s people, we are sustained not with physical manna, but spiritual, through the body of Christ, offered to redeem us and to fulfill our perpetual hunger.

So how do we get this BREAD?

B-Believe
R-Repent
E-Experience a relationship with God. Know Him!
A-Apply God’s Word in our daily lives
D-Die to our old self.

When we have tasted and seen that the LORD is good, we cannot ignore the hunger all around us. Like the disciples, we find our greatest satisfaction in sharing with the crowds with what we have been given. How will we feed them? Just like Christ asked the disciples how they would feed the multitudes, He is asking us the same question.

Are we a city on a hill? Will we let people go hungry, the next generation might need different bread than we have eaten. Will we give them His Word and show them our Savior?

In closing, the secret to being satisfied in Christ is staying hungry.

This seems opposite of what we would think because oftentimes our highest pursuit is comfort. Stay hungry, friends, stay near to the heart of God and look for the hunger all around you. We have a promise from God in Matthew 5:6

Matthew 5:6 (NIV)

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

When we eat our daily bread in God’s Word and share it with others, we relish in the relationship He has given us and are satisfied.