

Bread

I have - for today and tomorrow and as far as I can see ahead

Hunger

is not my problem.

Hunger

is a foreign problem - an ugly word I'd rather forget.

Hunger

reduces people
to insatiable longings
to dependent cravings
to shameful bribes
to selfish snatching
til dignity wears thin and they waste away.

Hunger

is tragic. But thankfully not my problem.

Except

when my longing for security refuses to be satisfied
when I crave recognition
when I bribe with a smile and snatch affection without a return
til humanity wears thin and my soul wastes away

Hunger

is our problem - for today and tomorrow and as far as I can see ahead

Bread

is for sharing abroad
like the beautiful word of God
like the loaf we break to remember him

Bread

Jesus took bread on the night he was betrayed
to satisfy all longings
He gave thanks to banish all cravings
He broke it
to feed the hungry

Bread

not bought or snatched or demanded
but freely given to us.

Give us this day our daily bread

What if...,

When John tells the story, he mentions that the loaves and fish came from a little boy who Philip found in the crowd. So here's another version of the story:

Jesus crossed lake Galilee which was also known as lake Tiberias. A large crowd had seen him perform miracles to heal the sick and those people went with him. When Jesus saw the large crowd coming towards him he asked Philip, "Where will we get enough food to feed all these people?"

He said this to test Philip since he already knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered "Don't you know that it would take almost a year's wages just to buy a little bread for all these people?"

Another of the disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up and said, "There's a boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But he won't even share that - I suppose it doesn't make any difference - what good is 5 loaves and 2 fish with all these people?"

And Jesus looked very sad. And the boy ate his lunch alone.

At a church in Haiti...

For 4 months every year, it is called "hungry time in the market town of Mombin Crochu in Haiti. While they wait for the main harvest, people eat mangoes to keep hunger pangs at bay - sometimes 15 or 25 pieces of fruit a day.

Twenty years ago the need for cash was forcing people to sell hard green mangoes: women, men and children streamed into town with full baskets on their heads. Lorry drivers from the city paid 50p for a basket of up to 200 mangoes. Weeks later, the mangoes arrived in London and New York - £1 each. Meanwhile in Haiti the mango trees were bare and people were even hungrier.

There were none of last year's beans, corn, peanuts or cassava left - because the land they had to farm was so poor. Much of the best flat land was used to grow rice for export. Meanwhile poor farmers work on hillsides so steep that pulling out the bean crop also pulls out the topsoil which tumbles down the mountain and is washed away. You could see the limestone rock poking through. Farmers said they were farming the bones of the mountains.

Paul Louis the village pastor was also an agricultural advisor. He encouraged the people to try new ways of farming that will yield more crops. One Sunday in "hungry time" he preached on the feeding of the crowd: about how Jesus took what people had and made it into something miraculous. Most importantly, everyone got something to eat.

As the communion plates were passed round, with the small bits of bread, members of the church could be seen watching each other carefully. They were making sure that no one took more than they were supposed to, they were so hungry. The pastor proclaimed the words of Jesus: "I am the bread of life. Whoever eats of me will never hunger."

