

A 13-year-old boy once read about Dr. Albert Schweitzer's work in Africa. He wanted to help. He had enough money to buy one bottle of aspirin. He wrote to the Air Force and asked if they could fly over Dr. Schweitzer's hospital and drop the bottle down to him. A radio station broadcast the story about this young fellow's concern for helping others. Others responded as well. **Eventually, he was flown by the government to Schweitzer's hospital along with 4 ½ TONS of medical supplies worth \$400,000 freely given by thousands of people.** When Dr. Schweitzer heard the story, he said, *"I never thought one child could do so much."*

We are not told how old the young fellow was who offered his five loaves and two small fish to Jesus. Neither Matthew nor Luke even mention him. They simply record that in answer to Jesus' request the disciples came up with five loaves and a couple of fish with which to feed a vast throng. The Gospel writers even differ in their estimate of the size crowd.

There is a time-honored story about a young minister preaching his first sermon in a tiny country church. He was VERY NERVOUS. His nervousness showed as he tried to expound on this text. *"The Master fed the multitude," he said, his voice quivering, "with 5,000 loaves and 2,000 fish."* An old fellow sitting on the front row chuckled sarcastically and said, *"Why I could do that."*

The next Sunday the young pastor tried again. *"Last Sunday I meant to say that the Master fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two tiny fish."* Then he turned to the old man and asked, *"Could you do that?"*

The old fellow grinned and said, *"I could if you'd let me use what we had left over last week."* The size of the crowd doesn't really matter. **The point of the story is Jesus' compassion and his ability to feed the hungry.**

**THERE ARE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHO GO TO BED HUNGRY EVERY NIGHT.** You and I have heard that truth so often, however, we might not take it seriously. That is tragic.

**Someone has noted that the average person BLINKS his eyes 13 times every minute. This person also noted that 13 PEOPLE STARVE TO DEATH every minute in this world.** That means, of course, that every time you and I blink our eyes, another person has died from starvation.

In an article sometime back in the CHRISTIAN CENTURY, Tom Peterson described the tragedy of world hunger like this:

*"Imagine a DC10 preparing to land; it is filled with pre-school children. Some of the children sleep; others play and laugh; still others cry out for any one's attention. But just before landing, something goes wrong, and the plane plummets to the ground, killing all aboard.*

*"Ten minutes later even before emergency vehicles arrive another planeload of children crashes right next to the first. Ten minutes later, a third crashes. And the tragedies continue: every ten minutes, a jet falls to the earth, all day and night, day after day, month after month.*

*"Such a great number of deaths is not farfetched. The same number of children, approximately 40,000 do die each day from hunger-related diseases."*

**Forty thousand children each day. The mind can hardly grasp the scope of such a catastrophe. YES, Millions of people go to bed hungry every night.**

**THIS HUNGER PERSISTS IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT WE LIVE IN A BOUNTIFUL WORLD.** Did you know that in one day Americans eat 228,000 bushels of onions? Every day of every year over a quarter million bushels of onions. And the earth just keeps on producing more and more. And that's just onions. That doesn't count all the corn, green beans, and broccoli, etc.

Annie Dillard describes what she calls **God's "ABILITY TO FEED ALL THE WORLD-POSSIBLE"** by using the example of a rye plant. In four-months a single rye plant can grow 378 miles of root and 14 billion root hairs. In one cubic inch of soil the length of these root hairs would total 6000 miles. **Image the food that can come from (1) healthy Rye Plant. What an abundant world!**

**The battle to feed the world's people is not a hopeless one.** God has given us the resources. **And in some places in the world real progress is being made.** For example, when we think of hunger, many of us still think of the nation of India. Yet in 1986, India grew so much grain that it didn't have enough room in its storage facilities to hold it all. And (17) years ago a famous rock concert was staged to raise money for the malnourished of Bangladesh; **these days, Bangladesh is self-sufficient.**

In our own country, of course, farmers are still producing far more food than we can possibly use. Lee Iacocca tells about a California dairy farmer who was so productive that the government paid him \$8 million to slaughter his herd.

In the 1950's and 1960's scientists were predicting world famine by 1985. They were wrong. There is plenty of food to feed the world's people. We don't really have a food problem. **What we have are people problems.** Some of these problems we can't do anything about. **For example, we can't do anything about the political problems of governments that use food as a weapon to CRUSH their own people.** And, we cannot control the ravages of climate in parts of the world. **But there are some things we can do.**

**WE CAN RETHINK OUR OWN STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH'S RESOURCES.** Did you know, for example, that **six million Europeans eat as much food as 240 million Africans?** Even more startling, the citizens of this country, who form only 5.7% of the world's population, eat half the food produced in the world. Somebody's eating more than their share! **We spend ten times more money on the feeding of cats and dogs than the sovereign country, Guinea, earns as its national income. WE ARE GREEDY PEOPLE. Each of us needs to examine our stewardship of the bounty with which God has blessed us.**

**WE ALSO NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NEEDS OF OTHERS... WHETHER THEY ARE OUR NEIGHBORS NEXT DOOR OR THE STRANGER ACROSS THE WORLD.** There is a wonderful old story about a missionary team in Africa. They were loading their boat to go down the Congo river. As they were preparing to start out, a native chieftain called to them from across the river: *"White man, I want you to come and tell my people about your God."*

The leader of the mission group answered, *"We can't come today. We have an appointment downstream this morning. We will come another day."* The chief persisted, *"No you must come today and tell my people about your great God."*

Again, the leader tried to explain that they could not go with him that day, but would be glad to come another day. This did not satisfy the chief. As the mission team pushed off to leave, the chief waded out into the water calling after the missionaries, *"White man, if you don't come tell my people about your God, I'll tell your God on you!"*

**I hope nobody ever tells God that we heard that 40,000 children are dying each day from hunger-related diseases and we did nothing to help. THAT WE PUT THEIR NEED OFF FOR ANOTHER DAY BECAUSE WE NEEDED TO PLAY GOLF, OR GO OUT TO BREAKFAST WITH A FRIEND, OR GO SEE A MOVIE.**

In 1930, during the Great Depression, a man named Golden Rule Jones was mayor of Toledo, Ohio. During his term of office, he sometimes sat as the presiding judge in night court.

One night a man was brought in for stealing money from a grocery store. His defense was that he needed the money for food and that he was simply a victim of hard times. Nevertheless, Golden Rule Jones found him guilty. "You did not steal from society," he said. "You stole from a private citizen and you broke the law. I'm fining you ten dollars. However," and he reached for his wallet, **"I'll pay it for you."** Next, he instructed the bailiff to pass the hat around the courtroom. *"I'm fining everybody here at least fifty cents. You're all guilty of being members of a society that made it necessary for this man to steal. The collection will go to the defendant."*

I believe that salvation is by grace and grace alone, but I wonder if one day the Divine Judge won't hold those of us who have so much accountable for those who have so little. The teachings of Jesus on such things ought to make us tremble. **WHY? BECAUSE-We are all accountable.**

**FINALLY, WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE HUNGERS IN THIS WORLD FOR MORE THAN BREAD. *Some of those hungers are right here in this room today...in our very own community.***

Erma Brombeck wrote once in a column that she dreamed every volunteer in the land had set sail for another country. She waved goodbye and breathed a sigh of relief. *No longer would she be bothered by someone badgering her to help with some drive or project.*

But then, she noticed that the reception desk at the hospital was vacant and the children's wing had no clowns and laughter. The blind listened for a friendly voice that never came and the crippled were imprisoned in wheelchairs that never moved. Flowers on church altars withered and died. Children in nurseries lifted their arms but there was no one there to hold them in love. The search for cures for diseases was cancelled for lack of interest. Symphony halls and museums were dark and still. Alcoholics, prisoners, shut-ins, the poor cried out in despair but no one came.

Erma continued, *"I sought in my sleep to regain a glimpse of the Ship of Volunteers once more. It was to be my last glimpse of civilization....as we were meant to be."* In our world today, THERE ARE HUNGERS BESIDE THOSE FOR BREAD. **Many of you are already involved in meeting those needs.**

**Of course, the greatest hunger people have is for the *Bread of Life which is Christ.*** The Christian missionary enterprise will not be completed until every child in this world has a full tummy, a safe and comfortable home in which to live, and knows deep in his or her heart that he or she is a child of God. That is an ambitious dream, is it not? *I believe that is a dream worthy of the followers of Jesus Christ.*

A relief official had just returned from the famine areas of Africa. He wrote a letter to a New York City newspaper telling of the young people, the young volunteers, he had found there who were giving their time and energy and who were making sacrifices to help the impoverished and suffering Africans. The young people were living in mean and difficult conditions, and the official was terribly impressed with them.

He wrote in his letter to the newspaper: *"As we passed the day together, I took a moment to ask each of them why they volunteered? Charles Petre, who had just finished a master of business administration program in France and planned to become an international consultant, said he was there, "to make a contribution." Ann Levin, with a master's degree in economics, said, "there was a need." And Mary Crickmore said it was her "Christian commitment."*

- Tell me, what is it that you are doing because of your Christian Commitment?
- Each of us can do something with the time and gifts we are given here on Earth.
- Each of us has some kind of "FISH & LOAVES" to offer the Master.
- What's yours and what will you do with them while you are here?
- AMEN.