

Give Them Their Food

Psalm 145 (NIV)

A psalm of praise. Of David. ¹ I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. ² Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. ³ Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. ⁴ One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. ⁵ They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty— and I will meditate on your wonderful works. ⁶ They tell of the power of your awesome works— and I will proclaim your great deeds. ⁷ They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. ⁸ The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. ⁹ The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. ¹⁰ All your works praise you, LORD; your faithful people extol you. ¹¹ They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, ¹² so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. ¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. ¹⁶ You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. ¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. ¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. ¹⁹ He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. ²⁰ The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. ²¹ My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.

Psalm 145 is a litany of reasons to praise the LORD. It was hard to narrow down and focus on one aspect until considering the other Bible readings for today: Manna and quail for the Israelites, God blessing the Corinthian Christians with seed to the sower and bread for food, and Jesus feeding the 5,000+ people. Then the verses jump out: “The eyes of all look to you, [O LORD] and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.” (verses 15-16) I was in 8th grade the first time I hear one of my friend’s dad use this as their mealtime prayer. I thought it was awesome that he just quoted Psalm verses, but it was a great lesson that God feeds all of his creation.

You can tell by looking at me that I am well-fed. In fact, I can’t recall a single time in my life where there was not food in a cupboard or pantry. Sure, we’ve had to make the groceries stretch, eat more than one meal of ramen, but I’ve not lived a day where I did not have food for tomorrow. The closest was maybe at the start of the pandemic where shelves in grocery stores were cleared off. Yeah. I couldn’t get what I normally would, but our family still had food. I guess this is my way of saying that I recognize that I’m privileged and have not experienced hunger along with food insecurity.

I haven’t checked your pantries, but maybe some of you have experienced hunger where you didn’t have a cupboard with at least something in it to eat in it like a packet of ramen. Maybe you had to pay your rent, your utilities, an emergency came up, and there wasn’t money for groceries. You made hard decisions or found yourself in situations where you went hungry. Maybe you lived with hunger and food insecurity as kids, not knowing if mom or dad would be home, let alone with some groceries.

About 800 million people go hungry every day, roughly 9% of the world’s population. It’s like our entire country going hungry 2 times over! I don’t know about you, but I know when I think about people going hungry, I think of third world countries where they don’t have the manufacturing capabilities or ease of distribution as we have. I think of governments and dictators and warlords who limit the food supply and keep people hungry as a form of control and selfishness. That kind of hunger feels far away, and, because it’s not right in my face, I tend not to think about a whole lot until I see a picture of a kid in one of those places with his ribs showing and someone asking for \$0.17 a day to feed them.

But people going hungry is not just something “out there;” it’s also here. 400,000 people in Utah are regularly hungry and going without food. 17,000 children in Davis county alone daily face food insecurity, not knowing where their next meal will come from. That’s a lot of people. How do I as one person make a difference with this? It’s overwhelming. I can’t feed 800 million people or 17,000 kids. I was glad to be able to donate and cook meat Saturday night for our Pie & Beer day cookout, but I honestly don’t think I could pay for someone’s groceries for a month. Can I really make a difference when it comes to hungry people?

There’s a temptation with my inadequacies and lack of resources to turn the responsibility away from myself and turn to blaming God. God, it’s said of you that “the eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.” (verses 15-16) You’re supposed to feed all people, not me. So, why are you letting people go hungry? Why don’t you get off your high cloud in heaven and do something! It’s said that “the LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.” (verses 18-19) I’m

calling, God. Why are there still hungry kids? It's said that "The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made." (verse 9) You gave manna and quail in the desert. You fed the 5,000+ with 5 little loaves of bread and 2 little fish. Why don't you so that again? Let's see that compassion and goodness. You're supposed to be righteous in all your ways and faithful in all you do. So, feed these hungry people already! What's wrong with God?

Is it what's wrong with God or is it what's wrong with us?

Do you know that there is enough food produced in the world to feed every single person their full recommended daily diet every day? God has provided plenty of food for all 7 billion people on this planet every single day, and he promises to continue to do so. The problem isn't that God isn't providing enough food; the problem is that people get in the way of God's providence.

In some cases, there are physical obstacles to food distribution such as lack of harvesting materials and machines or inadequate roads and vehicles. In other cases, people are not able to escape the poverty level that they were born into, governments oppress people instead of helping them, some are greedy and withhold food to gain a bigger profit for it than making sure that hungry people are fed. Some people are bad stewards of the gifts that God has given them and needlessly go hungry because of choices they have made. There are a lot of various and combined reasons why people go hungry, but it basically comes down to the biggest problem we all have: we are sinful people who do sinful things.

If we want to end world hunger, it's not as simple as "if we all just ban together, we'll fix this." A deeper issue has to be fixed in order for us to care more about our fellow human beings. It's a heart condition. Our hearts need to be changed. So, what can we do about it?

The good news is that our God doesn't just provide all the food needed for all people every day, but he also fixes hearts. God provides something better and more than food. He provides the bread of life. He provides his Son for us. He gave himself up for the entire world so that we would have a feast of the forgiveness of sins, of his perfect life covering over ours. When we hear about how Christ came and lived his whole life in service to us, in sacrifice for us, this changes us, changes our hearts. Knowing that we are forgiven and loved and made perfect by what God has done for us, we want to serve others as Christ served us. This is the change in heart that the Holy Spirit works in us that makes us then want to take care of other people and make sure that they are fed not just with food every day, but also with the true bread of life. When we eat and partake in what Jesus did for us, we are satisfied for ever and ever. Jesus as the bread of life fills us with eternal life with God. It's the most important meal of the day, one that we want to share with others.

Having our hearts changed by the true bread of life, by what Jesus did for us, what are we going to do about the hungry people in our world? It is an overwhelming problem. So, let's start by invoking the faithful and righteous one who hears and answers our cries to save us. Let's actively and repeatedly pray that God would be who he is and do what he does, that "you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing." (verses 15-16) Let's also pray that God would change hearts because he is the only one who can do that. We pray that he continually changes our hearts and all hearts to have in mind how we can serve others, particularly in helping to provide food for others, and, even more importantly, the bread of life.

With Jesus, the bread of life, having changed our hearts through his service to us, we look for ways that we will serve others so that they have the food they need day by day with what God has given us. Carrying out the will of God this way probably looks little, maybe insignificant, but it matters and it serves others. We give some school supplies to our neighborhood Title 1 school, EG King Elementary, so that parents and the school might have a little bit more money that can be used for food. We drop off foodstuffs at local food pantries like Open Doors, Fish-N-Loaves, or the Bountiful Food Pantry that will be used to help feed people. We can call up one of these places and ask what volunteer opportunities exist to give of our time. We can look into so many organizations whose entire mission is to combat hunger in various places around the world, not just here locally. We can give to our church's Assistance Fund knowing that the elders will use it to provide for people in need. But above all, pray. Pray to the LORD who is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love." (verse 8) Trust that he will provide and he will take care of us, especially because we can't do it all.

Our God opens his hand to satisfy the desires of every living thing. Exalt and praise our God because does not stop doing that, even when our hearts are cold and hard. Praise God that he has caused world hunger to decrease over the last 20 years, dropping from about 15% of the population to 9%. Tell of his wonderful acts. Share the God who not only satisfies our hunger day to day, but also satisfies our spiritual hunger and changes our hearts with himself as the bread of life. Amen.