

PARCHED AND HUNGRY

Everyone knows what it is like to be hungry and thirsty. But many people in the world are always hungry. They are literally starving. Famine is a pervasive threat to millions. How tragic and painful it is when people do not get enough food and fall victim to malnourishment. Although starvation affects all ages, it is especially difficult to watch infants, small children, and the elderly suffer.

Likewise, we have a sense of what it is like to suffer from extreme thirst. Although we never may have experienced it directly, we have seen or read about those who die of dehydration. For those who inhabit inhospitable areas where water is scarce, this resource is infinitely precious. The tragic consequences of running out of water are well known.

Some people have a less immediate hunger and thirst, but one that is no less harmful. Famine and drought are common today, even in areas where there is plenty to eat and drink. People feel a void, an emptiness, an undefined and general dissatisfaction. Although their lives are filled with good, they sense something is lacking. They are hungry and thirsty spiritually. Many are starving and parched, even amid plenty. In their search for satisfaction, people will stuff themselves with a steady diet of spiritual junk food. Sects and cults become popular. There is a demand for spiritual gurus and advisors. Thus, people will gorge themselves on food with no nutritional value and guzzle drink that does not quench thirst. They become overweight from eating, yet die from malnutrition. They drink every last drop, yet will still die from dehydration. They eat spoiled food and drink deadly poison, consuming food and drink that kills.

Many remain hungry and thirsty because they are eating the wrong food and drinking the wrong water. Cut off from God, the true source of life, many can eat only *imitation food* that does not satisfy because it cannot. Living without faith in Christ means a slow, agonising death.

Because of this, how much joy there is when one hears the Beatitude “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled,*” (Matt. 5:6). What good news! What is truly filling, truly satisfying, is the righteousness of Christ. He is the Bread of life. He gives the water of life. He fills us abundantly with a never-ending banquet of fine food and drink. He provides us with a table that overflows with edible, nourishing food. When we partake of Christ through faith, we will not be disappointed. Christ will satisfy us by giving us what we really need: The Bread of God.

The Lord’s Supper, too, is a wonderful gift from Christ. Our Lord nourishes us with His body and blood, which we eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sins. Clearly, our eating and drinking is not only spiritual, but also actual. By faith we eat and drink forgiveness while by our mouths we eat and drink the body and blood of Christ with the bread and the wine. In this precious Meal, our Lord invites us to eat and drink and be satisfied.

In this life, there always will be vestiges of hunger and thirst. Our craving for unhealthy food never will be wholly put away. Yet as we hunger and thirst after righteousness, as we eat and drink and are satisfied with the wholesome bread and water of Christ, we are reminded of that day when we will sit at the banquet table with our Lord in heaven and eat and drink with Him forever.