

This week in our Pilgrim journey through Jesus' Beatitudes, we've been looking at Matthew 5 verse 6:

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied".

I don't think that I've ever known what real hunger and thirst is all about. I've felt starving hungry and desperate for a cup of tea after a day in the garden but, in the scale of things, I've never known real, deep down, hunger.

When Magnus Macfarlane visited Malawi in 2002 during the famine, he met a mother dying of AIDS. He asked her eldest son Edward who was 12 what his dreams for life were and he replied "To have enough food to eat and to go to school one day". Edward's words were the catalyst for the charity Mary's Meals which now feeds over 1.6 million children daily in their place of education and in some of the world's poorest places. But children like Edward still exist – they know what real hunger and thirst is all about – that deep down longing in your belly when you've gone days without any proper food. And for Edward it was not just for food but also for education in a world full of unfairness and injustice.

I think most of us want to make a difference in life. Looking at Jesus' Beatitudes give us plenty of food for thought not only on what's wrong with the world and in our communities but also on our attitudes and care for those who are suffering or living in other difficult circumstances. And this poses the question: What can we do, or are we doing, to make a difference?

Listening to the news this past week with its highlights on all the world's injustice, suffering and lack of mercy affecting the lives of millions of people living in hopeless situations, it was easy to feel completely numb. Quite the opposite of hungering and thirsting for righteousness or, as we've been finding out over these weeks, for the world to be as God intends it to be. Unrest in the Middle East continues; the size of the world's refugee problem is totally unimaginable; modern day slavery is on the increase – particularly in the UK; corrupt governments abound – and so much more. Things and situations all seeming to be at a great distance from my influence or control. Yet the

prophet Micah told the people of his day that God requires us to love righteousness in a way that influences how we live our lives and how we make a difference. In Micah's words: "*to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.*" Micah 6 verse 8.

We know Jesus brought good news to the world. His life was good news in action and his "manifesto" that we looked at this week reflected Micah's vision and that of other prophets too, of a better world. But in the Beatitudes, I don't think Jesus is simply telling us to try harder at making the world a better place, it goes beyond that, because both Micah and Jesus encourage us to *live in humble fellowship with our God*. This seems to me to be the key to getting on the first step of understanding what hungering and thirsting for justice (righteousness) is all about and what that means for us. That it's only as we learn to draw closer to God and to his Son Jesus, that we can see the world through God's eyes and grasp something of Jesus' deep down longing – his hunger and thirst - for the world to be set to rights, for God's kingdom to come and for all to be satisfied.

The level of injustice in the world may continue to overwhelm me – I know it will - but knowing Jesus and walking with him day by day, my prayer must be:

Dear Lord, I pray that your Holy Spirit will show me what I can do to make a difference in any unfair and unjust situations I meet here at home and farther afield, rather than allowing me to dwell on what I can't do where things seem beyond my control. Amen

Pauline Hurst
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