

## **The Times They Are A-Changin': Ecclesiastes 3:1-15**

### ***World Food Day 2016***

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The children's class is currently learning about John the Baptist and Jesus. When they started the unit they didn't know very much about John the Baptist. Today they were reminded of how John's father raised him in the desert. How he learned to live off the land. That he hunted, but he also ate plants, honey, and even some bugs like locusts. They made some pretty cool bug cookies this morning like this one. <example> Knowing how to live off the land, John the Baptist was able to carry on his life's mission, of telling people about Jesus. When you know how to acquire food and shelter, you can follow your mission.

Yesterday our family took a stroll through a few hundred years of Iowa farming at Living History Farms. We saw what a 1700 Ioway Indian Farm might have looked like. Shelters made of Straw and leather hides. Gardens with corn in the center, and beans and squash growing around it. We saw an 1850 Pioneer Farm where the crops were grown in several small fenced in areas. Spaces small enough to reach in and tend to the crops easily come harvest time. And then we saw the much larger 1900 horse powered farm where we saw large plows, rows of land, and a lot more animals. The farther we walked the more we saw how farms changed over time, all in the same area of the same country. We saw how farms shifted from solely providing food for your family, to providing just a little extra to sell, to having to provide significantly more just to keep your occupation.

A couple of weeks ago we discussed the value and importance of sharing a meal at table with others. I see the kids reading from something written a few millennia ago on what someone ate. I go out to see the local sights and literally see and smell (because it's Living History Farms) what people at a few centuries ago ate. How appropriate it is that today is World Food Day. On October 16th each year, easy to remember, it's on Ali Lester's birthday each year, is World Food Day. A day set aside to take action against hunger.

Food, regardless of who you are, is a vital part of life. And just as Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes, knew, there is a season for planting and a season for harvesting. There is a season for working and a season for feasting. But as our new Nobel Prize in Literature winner would tell you, *The Times They Are A Changin'*. That means we don't eat the same foods people at a few millenia ago. That means, just as I saw farming change yesterday while walking through Iowa history, that farming will continue to change. It means farmers in India need to not only plant rice, fruits, and vegetables, but that they need to acquire more land with water for cows so they can meet the full dietary needs of their communities require more dairy in their diets. That means pork producers in France that aren't able to keep up with a growing population, need to acquire more land, not only to house more pigs, but more land to grow the grains needed to feed more pigs. That means in Cameroon, when coffee and cocoa prices drop, and the whole country is affected, exports go down, the farmers are in grave danger of even supporting

themselves, and imports lower tremendously, that they must learn to grow other crops to at least feed themselves and the people of their country.

In 2050, it is estimated that there will be 9.6 billion people on this earth. We're currently at 7.125 billion and we have an estimated 795 million people that do not receive enough food each day. With the climates changing, diets changing, natural disasters eroding away land, our food and agriculture must change too. That's the whole point of World Food Day, to raise awareness of these problems that farmers, fishers, and pastoralists, are facing. With consumer awareness and supporting the basic needs of everyone, goals can be met and people can be fed. As our friends at the Presbyterian Mission have stated, "Our faith calls us to work for a world where everyone has sufficient, healthy, and culturally appropriate food! And where those who produce and prepare the food are fairly compensated, respected and celebrated!"

Here in Iowa, 1 in 8 people don't get the proper amount of food daily. So what can you do? To ensure some of the basic needs are met for those around us, we can support our local farmers. We can work on wasting less of our food. It's estimated that 1/3 of the food produced for human consumption is wasted or lost. 1/3! We can continue to support local agencies like our Norwalk Area Ministerial Food Pantry. We can continue to support our local Backpack program at our schools. We can donate time and money to the Food Bank of Iowa, located in Des Moines. We can support programs that feed others during times of natural disaster, like Meals From the Heartland, who gave all the prepared meals they had to Haiti after Hurricane Matthew, and who continue to bag more food to continue sending their way. We can even grow food ourselves on our own little pieces of land or in containers and share with others our harvest.

Jesus spoke a lot about justice issues. (If women were given the same access to resources as men, in many countries, 150 million more people could be fed daily.) Jesus' actions were always in favor of doing what was right, no matter how big or how small. This issue of food might seem small to us, who have plenty, but in our world it's a big issue. One we can't comfortably forget. And yes, right now we are aware of some that are hungry, like those in Haiti that are missing meals. But a year from now will we still care enough to be worried about them? After another natural disaster hits somewhere else will we forget them? Do we care enough now to even know of the circumstances of various groups of people around the globe who hunger daily? Don't dismiss today. The point is to act. Somehow, some way, take some action. (Goal: By 2030, eliminate hunger.) Buy something local. Eat something local. Eat leftovers instead of throwing them away. And only buy what you'll actually eat instead of letting good food go to waste. Donate to a charity. Drive to pick up food for our local backpack program. Volunteer for Meals on Wheels. Somehow, act today.