

fam·ine

*noun*

extreme and general scarcity of food, as in a country or a large geographical area. When I think of what we did this weekend, the word extreme seems just that.

Yes there was a general scarcity of food for us, but nothing “extreme”. Extreme would describe the situation in Haiti, after the 7.0 earthquake that hit the country in 2010 it left 220,000 dead, and 1.6 million homeless. The Cholera outbreak that hit the Haitians only 9 months later killed 3,333 more by December and left 148,787 infected, due to a hurricane that mixed polluted waters which spread and worsened the epidemic.

The country is hurting and has been for a long time. When talking about Haiti this weekend, we all admitted to kind of forgetting about their plight. The media hyped it for a few months and then it faded behind whatever new cause the media deemed attention worthy. But what the media didn't tell us was HALF of the children in Haiti aren't vaccinated. They're left open to respiratory diseases, meningitis and diarrheal infections. 40% lack basic health care, and 75% lack running water or access to clean/safe water which is a direct relation to the 30,000 affected by malaria annually, and the 90% of kids who suffer from water born illnesses or intestinal parasites.

But Haitians aren't just a statistic they love and care just like the rest of us. One of my favorite people, Ned Allyn Parker, went to Haiti a few years back, every day he would go out and work, get picked up in the middle of the day to be taken to a different site for lunch. There was a little boy at his work site who was maybe 6, named Noel. Ned saw him every day and although they didn't have a common language they were friends. So Noel would sit with Ned while he waited to get picked up. One day after a really long day of working, Ned went to his usual spot to get picked up, but his ride wasn't there, Noel saw him sitting there waiting longer than usual, with no lunch, he came over and pulled out a medium sized mango.

So in Haiti mango is what the kids get to eat a lot of the time and it usually has to last them for 2 meals. Noel pulls out his mango peels it, splits it and gives half to Ned. That was supposed to be 2 meals for Noel, but he shared it with Ned, sacrificing some of his own needs for another, sharing what he had so selflessly, this 6 year old boy. It reminds me of another boy who shared his lunch of fish and bread.

The official theme of the 2013 famine is “Feed your 5,000” thinking of taking what you have and sharing it to help others. The two boys probably weren't very far from the same age, both didn't have much but very willingly gave what they had to share. Good Shepard is very much like those 2 boys, we always give what we can to share and help others.

We support the famine each year and donate money to whatever country either World Vision chooses, or lately, which ever country myself or the youth group chooses. But hunger doesn't just happen in third world countries, it doesn't just effect people thousands and millions of miles away, its right here on our own door step too.

This year we went downtown to pass out lunches to the homeless, we easily passed out 50

lunches and could've given out 50 more if we had gone a few blocks south or a few neighborhoods over.

The need is real, so real in fact that for the first time you can choose to send your famine money to the United States.

- In our own backyard, one in five children are growing up in families with incomes below the federal poverty level.
- Even before the recession, America had one of the highest poverty rates in the industrialized world.
- Today there are a staggering 16 million children living in poverty/food insecure households in the U.S.
- More than 46 million Americans are living below the poverty line the most since the late 1950s.
- Of the 25 richest industrialized nations, the U.S. has the highest childhood poverty rate (second only to Mexico)

So let's not forget those in our own country, those in our own back yard. Lets not forget the kids who rely on the school to get their meals, the families that depend on the food bank for groceries, the men and women on the corners, in the parks, down the street.

Let us spend on behalf of the hungry, satisfy the needs of the oppressed, make our light like the noon day. After all If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. Amen.