



Hunger Steals, the Church Gives

Speaker Adult model talk

Preparation:

- Pray that God will use your talk to bless both the people who hear your message and the communities that we are trying to reach, where the need is greatest. Pray that Jesus will inspire and challenge those who hear you to commit to give regularly and generously to the poor through Tearfund.
- Follow the Attention, Empathy, Insight, Options, You, structure to gain the greatest impact from your message. You are welcome to adapt all of the below to suit your own style.
- Please ask the church leader to introduce you and endorse the work of Tearfund during the service and before you speak.

Delivering the talk:

- Make sure all the congregation are given sign-up forms as they come into church or that these are put on the pews/everyone's seats. Make sure also that there are pens available for people to use. We have learnt this really makes a difference to sign up rates.
- Please make sure you have at least one maize bag, two if you are seeing more than 60 people. Keep the bag hidden until the right moment in the talk.
- Please note the film of Sylvia and Polly is shown half way through your talk/sermon. At the end of your talk they will need to show the Hold On montage at the end. (Available on the DVD)

*Please arrange for the Bible passages to be read before you speak: the talk refers to **2Kings 4:1-7, and 2 Kings 4:42-44 and John 10:10***

Note: By keeping your pace flowing, and allowing 3 minutes at the end for showing 'Hold on', this entire talk can be delivered in 20 minutes.

Talk outline: Pray briefly over the congregation that God will speak and that nothing in you will stand in the way.

Attention

Good morning. Let's talk about food! One of my favorite activities is eating, and I guess that is true for many of us here! Judging by the number of TV programmes, food is a national obsession too! In contrast, one of my least favorite activities though is going to the supermarket to buy the food in the first place! Finding a parking space, finding a trolley that goes in a straight line, finding what I'm looking for on the shelves as it's moved from where it was last time, finding the checkout with the shortest queue, and then the joys of unpacking it all when I get home! Such joy! But, how many bags (not plastic bags of course) of groceries do you buy in a typical week? (Pause for congregation comments). Five? Ten? A boot full?

I have here, the equivalent of a Malawian shopping bag. (Hold up the maize bag) Unlike us, a key difference is 80% of Malawians will have grown the food themselves! Filled with maize this would weigh 50kgs, so it's really heavy*. But this bag needs to sustain one family of five with two meals a day for one month. That doesn't sound a vary varied diet and at just 170 grams per person per meal, not much either. But for many, even that is just a dream.

*Keep the bags empty or stuff with newspaper! Injuries not required!!

Empathy

So when I feel weary doing the food shopping, I remember that one in nine people in the world would just love to swap their problem with mine. One in nine people in the world are undernourished. If one in nine of us here this morning were undernourished, how many would that be? (Pause for estimate)

And we know, particularly for children, hunger has a massive long term detrimental affect on their growing minds and bodies that will rob them of potential right through their lives. But it's so hard when we see things like this on our television screens. The problem just seems too big for us. And it's easy to feel things don't change and we wonder what happens to money that has been given in the past, and if it makes any real difference.

Yet while we wrestle with this, we know deep in our hearts that a world where 1 in 9 go to bed hungry isn't what God wants. He wants everyone to enjoy life in all its fullness. He wants everyone to have at least the basic nutrition that they need to realise their full potential. And deep down we know, that we as His Church, have role to play. But how?

Well I've got some amazing news to bring to you today. Because while:

Hunger steals hope. The Church gives life.

Insight.

In the passage we read from **2 Kings 4** we meet a widow who is desperately anxious about her about her two boys. While servitude as a means of debt repayment was permitted in Mosaic law, it was often abused. Servitude regularly became abusive slavery. Grindingly poor, and with no means to pay off her creditors she cries out to Elisha in desperation.

Elisha's response is insightful. He doesn't pay off her debts himself, or convince her creditors to cancel her debt. Instead Elisha gets her involved in answering her own needs. He asks the widow: 'what do you have in your house?' Well clearly, all but nothing except for a little oil. Hardly enough to resolve her problem. So having got the widow to identify the resources she had, he then asks her to involve her community and do something with the oil.

As instructed she and her sons go out and ask their neighbours for jars. Loaded with jars they go back home, where nothing short of a miracle happens. The little amount of oil fills all the jars to the point where the value not only pays off the widow's debt, it provides enough money to sustain her and her two boys.

Poverty tried to steal her boys, but God provided.

But what about today?

Well let us go to Malawi, sometimes known as the "warm heart of Africa" - a country that offers a host of delights with its unspoilt beaches, welcoming villages, and majestic mountains and plateaus. Well that's what the Tourist Board will tell you. But for all its beauty and warmth, it is also a country where 45% of the population are vulnerable to food insecurity. Malawi currently faces a food security and nutrition emergency coming on top of the devastating floods in 2015. Responding to the situation, the President of Malawi declared a State of National Disaster in April last year. The harvest last year has been one of the worst harvests in decades.

Hunger steals ambition. The Church gives potential

In Central Malawi, about an hour's drive from Lake Malawi, there's a small place called Chirambi village. There are 21 households living in this village. One of these households is headed up by a mother called Sylvia. Years ago when Sylvia was a girl, crops grew well, but the climate has changed and things are very different now. Sylvia's husband left her when things got difficult as drought gripped Malawi. With one bag of maize left, which in theory should only last one month, but with six months till the next harvest, she is struggling to keep her four children alive. What should the church do to help Sylvia?

If Sylvia was here today, in this church, what would you want to do to help her? (Pause for congregation to consider) Our first reaction might be, 'well let's give her food for her family'.

And while that would help in the short term, it doesn't really help her long term. She is still vulnerable.

Just like Elisha, the local church didn't do what we might first expect.

Just one hour away - in Chagunda village we meet Polly, and find a very different story. Lets watch this film and find out more.

PLAY FILM.

Just like the widow we read about in 2 Kings 4, Polly, with the active support of her church, has turned her life around. Sylvia is starting that same journey too.

While hunger steals dreams. The Church gives training.

The farming techniques used by people like Sylvia, have been used for generations in Malawi. But these methods require good rains, and without them communities have been left vulnerable to crop failure.

Polly's village was thrown a lifeline when Tearfund's local church partner, Assemblies of God Care (AG Care), got alongside them and presented a simple but remarkable solution. Like Elisha and the widow, AG Care didn't just give Polly a hand out. They helped her to see what she had, involved her community, and over time her life has been transformed.

Foundations for Farming is a course, run in the local church, which teaches people how to get nearly ten times as much from their land. Ten times!

The Conservation farming techniques being taught by Tearfund's partner, conserve soil and water by using surface cover (mulch) to minimise run-off and erosion, and improve the conditions for plant establishment and growth.

These methods result in higher yields and less dependency on food aid during times of low rainfall and drought. Malawi had a particularly bad season in 2016 and yet the families using the FFF techniques still saw much higher yields, to such an extent that families have a healthy surplus to build a future on.

Not only does Polly have enough food – she has surplus! And not only that, she now owns her own solution to her problems, and so is better equipped to solve future problems, and help others in the community.

God is in the business of provision and multiplication so that people can experience not just enough, but more than enough. We see it time and time again throughout both the Old and

the New Testament. In **2 Kings 4:42-44** we see God use a limited supply of grain and barley loaves to provide enough for 100 men who are facing famine in the land. They're provided with enough not only to eat, but have left-overs too!

And then in **John 6**, Jesus himself performs a very similar miracle, providing for not just 100 men, but 5,000, from an even smaller offering of loaves and fish. Again, the leftovers are bountiful! We're told the disciples filled twelve baskets with scraps left by the people who had eaten from the five barley loaves that day.

In our reading from **John 10:10** we read:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

In the previous chapter (John 9) there had been a hostile investigation into Jesus healing a blind man. The Pharisees rejected any idea that Jesus was from God. So chapter 10 starts with Jesus telling a parable about a shepherd and his flock, and the sheep recognising the shepherds voice. Jesus declares that he is the good shepherd, and that the key characteristic of the good shepherd is..... *(pause for a moment)*.....that his flock should have life and enjoy it to the full. God wants His people to experience life to the full. So if hunger comes like a thief to steal, the natural reaction of His church must be to give, and give life in all its fullness

So the training provided by AG Care doesn't just cover agriculture. Households also receive training in a number of income-generating activities, including how to run those businesses. In addition, the groups enable the farmers to meet on weekly basis to make savings and lend out money amongst themselves.

Members begin by saving small amounts, which are used as loans to start or grow new businesses. They are a proven method for communities to lift themselves out of economic poverty. Polly joined a group in her community and was able to get a loan to start her doughnut business.

But of course we must remember that for every success story like Polly, there is Sylvia just starting her story, and many other stories waiting to be written.

There is so much need, and through our partners like AG Care, Tearfund wants to empower churches all over the world to release families from hunger and give them a hope for a better future.

Sylvia said - 'God is good... so I believe that one day, I will get a breakthrough.' And we know that step by step families like hers will be able to rebuild every area of their lives. But we need you to help us get to them.

Hunger steals ambition, the Church gives abundantly.

Options

Bill Hybels once said 'The local church is the hope of the world.' In Malawi, Tearfund's local church partners are following Jesus to where the need is greatest, and providing material and spiritual care to thousands like Polly and Sylvia. They are bringing hope to some of the most desperate situations and providing people with the knowledge, skills and tools they need. Futures are being re-written as the local church equips people in Malawi to lift themselves out of poverty. But how much do you think it costs to train someone like Polly or Sylvia on new farming methods and how to save and set up and run their own successful business?

£1,000?

£500?

£100??

(Pause)

No. £10!! Yes that's correct. £10!! A family fed...continuously, and a successful business for £10. That is less than the cost of one of my shopping bags from a supermarket. Yet this, like the oil in the widow's jar, just keeps giving. It's hard to image more impact for such a modest sum.

Hunger is a thief. It robs people of their freedom, ruins their self-esteem and wrecks their dreams. But the Church is stronger.

Whatever hunger has taken, the church can restore. Because however strong hunger is, the church is stronger. And when people are freed from hunger, they can step into a life in which they don't just survive but thrive.

So unashamedly, as part of God's Church, I'm giving you an invitation this morning.

Will you join us as together we empower local churches to release more people from hunger? You can help us provide training in innovative, sustainable farming techniques that could enable families to secure a hunger-free future – even in a challenging climate.

You

On your seat is a leaflet. And I want to invite you to support this work today. To accept the invitation, simply fill in your details and hand the form to me at the end of the service, and we will do the rest. If you don't have your bank details, or need to talk with your family first, just pop your contact details down, and tick this (pointing to it) box, hand it to me

afterward, and a lovely person from Tearfund will phone you over the next few days for a gentle, no pressure conversation.

For Sylvia's to be able to feed her family and help them thrive, she needs at least 12 bags of maize. This year she has only harvested four. £10 a month over a year could provide twelve families with farming training – to grow enough food and have a healthy surplus to build a future on. Or £12 a month would help one family every month, and every six months you'd help an extra family for free!!

Whether you can give £10, or a different amount each month, your support will help us release the potential of people like Sylvia so please consider partnering with us today.

As we take a moment to reflect on this, let us watch a short slide sequence, **(Hold On)**.

After the service I will be at the back of the church. Just come and chat, and I'd love to receive any completed leaflets.

Thank you so much.

Play the Hold On slide sequence.