

Eat Dirt and Die

Rising food prices have Haitians eating mud pies. Mixed with oil and sugar, the dirt patties provide taste for empty mouths and ballast for hollow stomachs. Only the poorest people – even by Haiti's shocking standards – resort to such snacks.

When Alexander Solzhenitsyn first entered a prison camp in the Soviet Gulag, he spied two men digging grayish lumps from a coal pile and gnawing at them. They explained that chunks of "sea coal" stretched one's rations and, while providing no nutrition, did no harm.

Such stories make me pause in mingled gratitude and contrition to be among an overfed minority in a world where hunger rules. It also strikes me that these people only scarf soil because they have no access to real nourishment. Hunger may drive a human being to eat dirt but only a madman munches mud in preference to real food.

Isaiah 55 opens with the picture of God bellowing his bounty like a ballpark vendor in the eternal grandstand of Heaven. The Almighty throws open the divine concession stand and tears down the price list. Belly up and chow down at the all-you-can-eat buffet of the Lord's unending presence! We then stand stunned as some reject the offer. "Why," God marvels, "do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance."

The prophet prefigures the modern marvel of professing believers who munch on mud pie messages and sea coal sermons when Scripture serves up the beef and biscuit of solid truth. Sweetened with sugary self-fulfillment and buttered up with cholesterol carnality, the junk food theology purveyed from many pulpits hides its earthy origin under a saccharine spirituality.

It occurs to me that gospel goodies designed to make us feel at home in the world must be dirt in disguise. True spiritual food must, I think, make me yearn to take my seat in the eternal banquet hall. The slick packaging of prosperity may temporarily quiet the hunger pains of the soul but only the preaching of the cross truly satisfies.

Meat 'n' Potatoes,
Doug