

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: Blessed Are Those Who Hunger And Thirst For Righteousness

Text: Matthew 5:6

INTRODUCTION: This beatitude speaks of strong desire, of driving pursuit, of a passionate force inside the soul. It has to do with ambition, of the right sort, whose object is to honor, obey, glorify God by partaking of His righteousness. This holy ambition is in great contrast to the common ambitions of men to gratify their own lusts, accomplish their own goals and satisfy their own egos.¹

Satan, known as Lucifer, or the bright one, wasn't satisfied with basking in God's glory and sought his own glory, Isaiah 14:13-14 *"But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly. In the recesses of the North. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."* His ambition was not to reflect God's glory but his own.

King Nebuchadnezzar ruled over the greatest of all world empires. Cf. Daniel 4:24-27 is the interpretation of the dream, vs. 28-30 the king reflected in his own glory and pride, in vs. 31-33 the judgement of God was pronounced (but King Neb also repented in later verses).

The parable about the rich farmer who built more barns for his stuff. Luke 12:19-20 *"And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry. ²⁰ But God said to him, You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?"*

These all hungered for the wrong things. Any human has a right to seek whatever makes him or her happy under the law, but choosing material, wealth, accolades, and fleshly satisfaction is not going to last.

POINT 1 - THE NECESSITY FOR SPIRITUAL HUNGER. Hunger and thirst are natural necessities for physical life. Jesus demonstrates the necessity for spiritual hunger is necessary too. Righteousness is not an optional spiritual supplement. You can't live that long without food or water physically, and you can no more live spiritually without hunger for righteousness.

Throughout the history of the world famines have plagued countries and groups. A starving person has an all consuming passion for food and water and doesn't focus on anything else. Nothing else can appeal to him.

¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Matthew 1-7; pp.177

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1A - The heart of every person in the world was created with a sense of inner need, yet without God's revelation men do not recognize it nor can they satisfy it. Isaiah 55:2 "**Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?**" Jeremiah 2:13 "**To hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.**" Like the prodigal we are all prone to take the good things God has given us and squander them on pleasure, fame and power. But will you stay in the slop? Cf. 1 John 2:15-17

1B - Seeking satisfaction only in God and His provision is a mark of true believers. Those who belong to the King hunger and thirst for the King's righteousness. They desire sin to be replaced with virtue and disobedience with obedience. The first three beatitudes are costly and painful, the fourth is positive.

POINT 2 - THE MEANING OF SPIRITUAL HUNGER. Most of us have never faced life treating hunger. The strongest and deepest usage of the natural realm are used here to represent the desire for righteousness. The present participle used is used in each case signifies continuous longing, continuous seeking.²

Luke 6:21 "**Blessed are you who hunger now**" he uses the present tense meaning not a future meaning. This should be a constant state of your life, a continuing process to hunger for the righteousness of God.

Q-How many of you can say that of the Psalmist David in Psalms 63:1 "**O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.**" Can we say as Paul did in Philippians 3:10 "**that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings**".

John Darby wrote, "*When the prodigal son was hungry he went to feed on the husks, when he was starving, he turned to his father.*"

POINT 3 - THE OBJECT OF SPIRITUAL HUNGER. First, it's for salvation. It begins with poor in spirit, leads to mourning, and meekness, then a hunger for the righteousness of God.

The Jews greatest obstacle to receiving the gospel was their self-righteousness, their confidence in their own purity and holiness, which they imagined was created by good works.³

² The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Matthew 1-7; pp.181

³ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Matthew 1-7; pp.182

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Second, it's for believers. The object of growing in hunger and thirst for righteousness is from being redeemed by the Savior. No believer "arrives" spiritually until he reaches heaven. To claim spiritual perfection beforehand is unbiblical and impossible. Children of God never stop hungering for more of the righteousness of God.

3A - In the Greek language, verbs such as hunger and thirst are in the partitive genitive, a case that indicates incompleteness or partialness. A literal English translation would be "*I hunger for of food*" or "*I thirst for of water*". The idea is that a person only hungers for some food and some water, not for all the food and water in the world. Jesus uses the accusative and righteousness is the unlimited object of hunger and thirst.

It's also worthy of note, Jesus indicates this is not some form of righteousness but the righteousness of God. Thus, we cannot have our longing satisfied in this life, so we are left to continually hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God which will be fully satisfied when we aren't clothed in this flesh but in a new body!

POINT 4 - THE RESULT OF SPIRITUAL HUNGER. It is being filled or satisfied. The Greek word used here was frequently used of the feeding of animals until they wanted nothing else. They were allowed to eat until fully satisfied. Our part is to seek, His part is to satisfy. It is a paradox, we seek continually, always wanting more, but we are satisfied. It is the very satisfaction that makes us want more.

God satisfying a hungry and thirsty soul is a common theme in the Bible, Psalms 107:9 "*For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.*" Psalms 34:10 "*The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.*" Jesus told the woman at the well if she drinks of the water He gives, she will never thirst again.

POINT 5 - CONCLUDING APPLICATION. Here are few things to test spiritual hunger.

- Are you dissatisfied with yourself? Romans 7:24 "*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*"
- You must be free from external things for satisfaction.
- You must crave the Word of God for spiritual food. Jeremiah 15:16 "*Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart.*" The more you seek God's righteousness, the more you will devour the Word. To the one who truly seeks God's righteousness, even the hard things are sweet. Proverbs 27:7 "*One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.*"