

MATTHEW 5:6, Part 2

Blessed Are the Hungry, Part 2 5-15-16

Matthew 5:6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* Most of you know that we began our look at this verse last Sunday. Jesus has said that there is a pursuit that is proper for the life and activities of a disciple which pursuit happens to be the way to happiness. But Jesus says happiness is not gained by pursuing happiness but by pursuing something else. And we went from there to see that the object of this pursuit is righteousness. It was when man lost righteousness that he lost happiness and so to regain happiness he must strive again for righteousness. That is the object of the pursuit. And then we looked at the pursuit itself which is described for us in a very vivid way by the use of the terms “hunger” and “thirst.” Jesus said, “Blessed are the hungry and thirsty.” To pursue righteousness is to have an appetite for it and the appetite of hunger we saw to be one that is conscious - you are aware that you are hungry. It is constant. It comes back time and again. It is thirdly uncomfortable, but it is worth the discomfort because it leads us to what we need - food for the body or the soul and so it is a very useful appetite. The object pursued is righteousness. The pursuit described is hunger and that brings us to point #3 or for today point #1.

The promise of satisfaction. Jesus said, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*” This is God’s promise and He says it many ways and many times Luke 1:53a *He has filled the hungry with good things.* Psalm 107:9 *He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.* Notice the subjects and verbs here. In our text it says the hungry shall be satisfied. That is a passive verb. But here we have active verbs because the subject is God. 9 *For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.* The reason you can be sure the hungry will be filled is because God does it. He satisfies. The man hungry for righteousness is not satisfied by his own moral efforts. What righteousness he has, whether judicial, legal righteousness or personal, moral righteousness is a gift from God. But how does God do it? Does He look down and say, “Oh, there’s Gail Nelson hungering for righteousness” and “zap” he makes her righteous? No, no. That’s not how God does it. When God finds one of his sheep is hungry what does He do? He leads him into green pastures, where He can feed upon that which nourishes. He leads beside quiet waters where he can quench his thirst. Isaiah says this of God’s sheep. Isaiah 49:9cd,10 *Along the roads they will feed, and*

their pasture will be on all bare heights.10 They will not hunger or thirst, nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; for He who has compassion on them will lead them and will guide them to springs of water. When God leads a man into the paths of righteousness he takes them to nourishment. He doesn't just zap; He uses means to the end. When a man hungers for righteousness he puts that man in a place where he'll be fed on the truth for it is by the truth that God sanctifies. He puts that man among the purifying influences of godly company or of fiery trials. God uses His people, His word, His ways and means but in it all He is sovereign and He alone satisfies the hungry soul.

For the man or woman who hungers for righteousness God does this in several ways. Their desire for righteousness is filled now and immediately by justification thru faith alone. God imputes to them the righteousness of Christ and counts them as righteous. But the hungry man, glad as he is for this legal righteousness, wants more. He wants personal, moral righteousness and God satisfies that also by sanctifying the man; that is, he makes him more and more holy, more and more like Jesus Christ in the way he thinks and lives and eventually He will make him sinless, perfect in glory. The one God justifies He will also eventually glorify. This glory, this moral perfection is the great hope of the hungry man, the hope that one day we will be completely free from sin. Most folks look forward to heaven so they'll see Aunt Suzy, but do you desire heaven so you will be like Jesus? I John.3:2 *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.* Won't that be great! The great end of our salvation is to be holy as our blessed Lord is holy. The hungry man eagerly and actively waits for this and strives for this. I John 3:3 *Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.* Is your greatest desire to be pure and your greatest burden to know you still sin? Are you hungry for righteousness? Good news. Great news. There is a feast ahead. When God describes heaven so we humans can understand it He uses several images and one of those is the feast Luke 13:29 (NIV) *People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.* Revelation 19:9b *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.* Revelation 7:14b-17 *They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. 16 They will hunger no longer, nor thirst*

anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes. You'll hunger no more. You'll have a feast. Prime Rib? Maybe - but for sure we will be filled in our souls with righteousness. We shall be like Him. Praise God. Blessed are the hungry for righteousness. He will satisfy.

This is the promise and there is at least one thing here you should come to grips with. God says of righteousness, and of Himself - He who seeks does find. That's not true of peace or pleasure, of money or prestige. These are things you can pursue with all your heart and with all your strength and you may end up frustrated. But he who seeks righteousness finds. He who hungers for righteousness will be satisfied. Righteousness, listen now, righteousness is the one thing you can have as much as you want. God offers a smorgasbord of the Spirit's fruits. The only limit is your appetite. Do you see the implications of that? God is the one who fills but if you aren't righteous where lieth the blame? Don't think that you want to be righteous but God isn't answering your prayers. Oh no. If you don't have righteousness it's because you don't want it as much as you want other things. You don't value it. But it is the treasure of treasures. Without it you die, with it you live forever. And I would, oh how I would have you hunger for righteousness.

This leads to my next point - the need for spiritual hunger. Let's imagine that you are a parent; you are Kelly Laird and you call your kids in for supper, and son Drew, instead of running in, sort of drags himself to the table. And even though you are serving pork chops and sweet potatoes, one of Drew's favorites, he just pokes at it and plays with it. What would you, as a parent, conclude? You'd say that this boy who usually has a hollow leg is either sick or he's been feeding on some kind of junk before supper. When the appetite for nourishing food is not present, something is not right. And in a creature made in God's image when an appetite for righteousness is missing, something is very wrong. Truly truly we all need a hunger for righteousness.

Now there are those whom Jesus calls the *filled*. These are the ones who think, "I'm righteous enough." Oh, you may be the first one to say, "All men are sinners" but somewhere in your religious life you've reached a point where you've decided, "I'm religious enough. I've attained a satisfactory portion of godliness" and you no longer hunger for righteousness. Maybe you are an older person, having entered into the days of declining physical prowess and you've reconciled yourself to spiritual declension as well. Please don't do that. There is no retirement from

discipleship. Don't ever sit back and say, "I've done my time for God." Now is the time for hungering after righteousness. Even if you're 110 you need this hunger.

Those of you who are younger, maybe you think, "I'm righteous enough." You look around at your peers and their immaturity and figure you are better than they are, so you're satisfied. I want to encourage you -- Now is the time to hunger for righteousness. Even if you are 10 you need this hunger.

Now, some would raise the question here of Christian perfection. Can we ever be sinless in this life? Few today would say, "yes" to that and I too would agree that Biblically this is impossible. But it doesn't bother me too much if you believe perfection is possible just so long as you don't think you've reached it. When you no longer hunger for righteousness in this life you're in trouble. Paul said, *Philippians 3:14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. I have not attained but I strive on.* You know Jesus did say that He is the Bread and the Water that satisfies but the promise that you will hunger no more is a comment on the abundant supply. But you must partake of that supply without ceasing. Some of you don't because in your eyes you are righteous enough. You need hunger. I need hunger. Leonard Ravenhill has said that the reason we do not see revival is because we are content to live without it and the same is true with righteousness. Do you see godliness as an option in life or a necessity? Friends, Jesus did not say, "Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness and less blessed are those who are filled." In *Luke 6:25a Woe to you who are well-fed now. Woe to those who are righteous enough. This hunger for righteousness is not a religious extra for the few. Without it you have no claim to being in Christ.* Walter Marshall writes: "*What a strange kind of salvation do they desire that care not for holiness. They would be saved by Christ & yet be out of Christ in a fleshly state. They would have their sins forgiven, not that they may walk with God in love, in time to come, but that they may practice their enmity vs Him, without any fear of punishment.*" When God saves a man He convicts him of sin and plants within him this hunger. Now, by the standards of men you may rate as "very religious" but when God looks at your life does He see hunger, a pursuit of righteousness, a striving?

Our final point is this: What are the marks of a man or woman who hungers for righteousness? I have 23 marks, so we might be here a while. Really I just say that so you will feel relieved when I tell you the truth - I have only nine marks of the spiritually hungry man. Nine facts about the man

who hungers for righteousness. First, he will be satisfied with nothing else. To start with he won't be satisfied with his own righteousness. He sees it for what it is, the filthy garments of fleshly endeavor. The hungry man doesn't just glibly say, "Oh, yes, we're all sinners." He takes his sin seriously. And the reason so few people hunger for righteousness is they really still believe they are okay, that they have their own supply tucked away. But you must renounce your own righteousness or else you will never hunger for the real thing. The hungry man knows he doesn't have the real deal and he will be satisfied with nothing else.

He also won't be satisfied with superficial religious activity. The fact that he is religious is no comfort to his soul. Spiritual hunger cannot be satisfied with ceremony and ritual and external religiosity. You know, you can give your child a toy and keep him happy for a while but if he's hungry he'll just throw the toy back at you. Pacifiers are great for infants but when the baby is hungry the passy is futile. The child must have nourishment, he must have food and nothing else will satisfy. So it is with the man who hungers for righteousness.

Our second mark of such a man is that he prays for righteousness. Since he has no supply of his own he knows he must look to another to meet his need and so he cries out to God. When a child is hungry he lets his parents know doesn't he? Right. He cries for food and so the Christian cries for holiness. He cries to God for righteousness. David is such a great example of this. In the Psalms he was always crying to God to make him righteous. 51:**10** *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.* This kind of prayer is all over that great 119th Psalm 119:**35-37** (ESV) *Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. 36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! 37 Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. 133 Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me. 135 Make Your face shine upon Your servant, And teach me Your statutes.* Jesus said, "You have not because you ask not." Well, ASK! The hungry man prays for righteousness. Are you hungry?

#3 The man hungry for righteousness takes pains to obtain it. We speak of athletes being "hungry" starving for victory. Running backs can "smell that goal line." It's this being hungry that produces great effort in the game and in practice. I remember hearing a preacher talk of Larry Bird, the basketball star who made 90% of his free throws and the preacher asked the question, "How did Larry Bird get so good?" By shooting free throws from 11-12 each Sunday morning? No, the

athlete hungry for greatness works out diligently and daily. He eats, drinks, and sleeps his sport. As the coach puts it, “he wants it.” Do you want it my friend? Are you hungry? Our subject is righteousness. Is that your primary goal in life? Can you say with Jesus, “My food is to do the will of God”? Then what are you willing to do to get it? Our coaches told us, “No pain; no gain.” How much do you want righteousness? More than money, more than friends, more than pleasure, rest and ease? What are you willing to give up to be righteous? Some physical food? Some earthly pleasures? Some money or time? This is where the rubber meets the road, yes? I Timothy 4:**7b** *Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. You ready for that? But, oh, preacher, you don't understand; I don't have that kind of time.* Some of you busy men, if your wife were asked, “has your husband ever said, “Honey, I'm busy this week. I don't have time to eat” what would she say? You find time to satisfy your bodily hunger. It's amazing how we always find time to do what we want and we always make sure our hunger is filled. But, the full man doesn't go out of his way for righteousness. You won't find him getting up early to pray, you won't find him turning off TV and turning on his mind to read the word of God. Do you hunger for righteousness? Honestly, do you? You can tell by whether you take pains to obtain it.

#4. The man hungry for righteousness does not feed on other things. That boy who's not hungry at supper - what's he done? He's nibbled on candy and the like so that he's lost his appetite. He has no desire for nourishing food because he's filled up on junk. The man hungry for righteousness won't let that happen. In a sense, because he knows what he needs, he protects his appetite. You've seen the ads for those diet pills that curb your appetite. Take two and you won't get hungry. Satan has the same things and some of you take his drugs without knowing it, and there goes your hunger for righteousness. Do you want such an appetite? Maybe you've had a good appetite before and it's gone because you have been feeding on the junk food, the candy of the world such as excessive TV or games and amusements. Listen to this -- researchers have conducted experiments in which they place an electrode into a rat's brain that registers a sensation of pleasure. If the rat is given the choice of two levers, one that releases food into its dish and one that switches on direct pleasure without the need to eat, the rat presses the pleasure lever until it dies of starvation. Is there anything wrong with your pleasures? Not in themselves but if they kill your hunger for righteousness they become deadly. You can only consume so much and the man who really wants righteousness learns not to feed on other things.

The fifth mark of the hungry man is that his appetite for righteousness increases. As a child grows this is true physically and its true spiritually. The hungry man never gets to the point where he thinks, "I'm righteous enough." He never gets permanently satisfied. He wants more and more. Maybe you have sung the hymn that says, "We taste thee o thou living bread and long to feast upon thee still; we drink of thee the fountainhead and thirst our souls from thee to fill." The men who have known God best are the ones who long to know Him better. Tozer says, "*To have found God and still to pursue him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart.*"

#6 The man hungry for righteousness values whatever will promote it, whatever will make him more godly. If that is the Bible, he loves the word, if prayer he values that, if church he values that. In fact he values what promotes righteousness so that even if it is painful he appreciates it. He does not despise God's chastening. He looks at trials as a means of grace. Psalm 119:**71** *It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.* And instead of turning away from criticism and rebuke the hungry man thanks God for it. This last matter I believe is a very telling factor. Proverbs 9:**7-8** *He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself. 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.* How you respond to reproof is very revealing. If you want to feel righteous you will hate reproof because it makes you feel unrighteous. But if you want to be righteous, if that is your goal then you will appreciate reproof because, whether it is accurate or not, it can't hurt and will likely help you to grow. Proverbs 12:**1** *Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.* 27:**5-7** (NIV) *Better is open rebuke than hidden love. 6 Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. 7 One who is full loathes honey from the comb, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.* That is, to a really hungry man, even that which is unpleasant --discipline, trials, rebuke --is valued because it fills my need, my longing for righteousness. The hungry man values whatever will promote his growth in righteousness.

#7 The hungry man goes where he will be fed. This is undoubtedly true. Some of you have experienced this reality with stray cats. You feel sorry for the poor, scrawny creature and so you feed it on Thursday. What happens on Friday? That cat is back at your house. A hungry cat, a hungry cow, a hungry man will go where he will be fed. And a hungry Christian will do the same thing. You say you hunger for righteousness? Are you putting yourself in a position where you will

get it? Are you employing the God-ordained means of grace? Do you gather often with God's people? Do you give attention to personal Bible study and prayer? To public Bible Study and prayer? Do you listen to Christian podcasts and radio? If your answer to these questions is, "No" then do you truly hunger for righteousness? The hungry man goes where he will be fed.

#8 The man hungry for righteousness will not be stopped by fear. So many like the idea of righteousness but are terrified by what a radical commitment to Christ would do to them. Tozer writes: *"It is difficult to take our cross and plod on to the dark and bitter hill of self-renunciation. For every one that actually crosses over into the Promised Land there are many who stand for a while and look longingly across the river and then turn sadly back to the comparative safety of the sandy wastes of the old life."* In the book by CS Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, part of the Narnia Chronicles, Lewis tells of a girl named Jill who was walking through a forest and developed a tremendous thirst as she heard the babbling of a nearby brook. When she finally found the stream she was terrified because between her and the water sat the great lion Aslan who represents Christ in these stories. Jill was paralyzed between her thirst for the water and her fear of the lion, but as she stood still her thirst grew so great that she decided she would do anything for that water. Fear could not stop her and she went forward, putting her life in the lion's hands, to kneel at the stream and enjoy the coolest, freshest, most satisfying water she had ever tasted. Her thirst overcame her fear because she knew she had to have that water. She could not face life without it. Do you believe you must be righteous? Or is it something you can take or leave? David said, Psalm 42:**1,2a** *As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God.* Psalm 63:**1b** *My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You.* When you want it that bad fear will not stop you.

#9 The man who hungers for righteousness will actually exhibit righteousness. He will grow in righteousness because God does satisfy. God does satisfy.

Now, have I been describing you? If so, you are, according to Jesus blessed, for you are hungry. If not, you are according to Jesus cursed for you are full. What can I do to make you hunger? What can I say? Righteousness, it is so sweet! It is blessed. It is well worth the risk and the pain and the denial. It is worthy of your hunger. Until you have righteousness you aren't ready to die and until you hunger for it you aren't ready to live. So may God today visit the hungry with fullness and the full with hunger. Amen. Let's pray!