

A Hunger and Thirst that can only be Sated by God

Matthew 5:6

Well, I hope everyone was well fed at Thanksgiving. More than any other time of family gatherings it seems like a time for overeating. Michal and I ended up going down to my brothers in Denver and they had turkey and an abundance of fixens. Too much and of course I knew we weren't going to have leftovers so I thought I better get it while I could.

It was great at the time but you know how it goes when you over eat and especially when you over eat turkey. But don't blame the turkey or the tryptophan in it. Myth has it that tryptophan is the chemical in turkey when you eat a large portion reacts in your body and makes you sleepy. But nutritionist say not so. The thing that makes you so sleepy is the amount of food you tend to eat at Thanksgiving and the bodies natural desire to slow down so it can properly process all that food.

In any case, it was good. Like you, every Thanksgiving I look forward to the turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes and everything else. My mouth begins to water days before thinking about it and the morning of, I begin to get really hungry, expecting a feast.

In a spiritual way, this is what Jesus is talking about in the next part of the sermon on the mount. Look with me.

Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

For those who are anticipating, looking for and looking forward to a spiritual feeding from the Master's hand, they will be satisfied.

One of the first things I wanted to say about this passage is the hunger and thirst Jesus is speaking about is not something that is created by our own thoughts but it is a gift given to us by our God.

Solomon, in the God given wisdom he had wrote the following.

Ecclesiastes 3:11a, “He (God) has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their hearts...”

1. God has placed within each person a desire, a hunger and thirst for eternity.

Meaning, each person is born with an awareness that we are not alone. You might have also heard it said that we are born with a God-sized hole in our heart. Something is missing in our life and we know it. There is some sense of longing for something more than what we see in the physical world around us. Some truth, some purpose to life.

I am reminded of all the comic strips and pictures that play to this theme. People climb to the highest peak to hear from some sage who has been living on top of the mountain, hoping to hear the meaning of life.

Almost any place in the world you can find a people who create different forms and ways of feeding this hunger for eternity. They create gods they can worship or they use the sun, moon, stars, sky and even the spirit of nature. Realizing there is more than just this short life on earth is a universal hunger that has been placed in all humanity by God since creation. God has set eternity in the hearts of people.

Now there are a couple of different ways this hunger can be addressed. One is true and positive, another is not.

Let's first think about the way the many people throughout the ages have tried to fill their hunger but have failed.

2,700 years ago, the Lord's spokesmen Isaiah said this. **Isaiah 55:2-3a, "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and you labor for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear Me that your soul may live."**

Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke for God and He said it like this about the Israelite people. **Jeremiah 2:12-13, "My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, that can hold no water."**

In their pursuit of filling the inner hunger and thirst they are experiencing and know is there, people over the ages have tried to sate it with many things. Created things, entertaining things, lustful things, drug and alcohol induced things and many, many other short sighted, temporary things that are empty and leave the person still wanting. They are drinking out of empty cisterns of their or the world's making.

Well, Jesus has something to say about this insatiable hunger and relentless thirst of the soul.

Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

That there is a hunger and thirst for eternity within each of us there is no doubt. But how does Jesus address this? He acknowledges there is a hunger and thirst but He identifies it as a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Now you have heard me say righteousness can be defined as living right according to God's ways.

2. Righteousness – Living according to God’s ways

This is really what Jesus is talking about.

Righteousness, living according to the ways God has put in place.

Depending on which version of the Bible you use, righteousness is a word that is found close to 300 times in the Bible with 100 of those in the New Testament. Righteousness is used by Jesus five times right here in the sermon on the mount.

For us to get a greater understanding of how Jesus is using the word righteousness I think it would be helpful to see the structure He uses in this part of His sermon.

I have listed in your outline the Beatitudes which are the first eight verses of this sermon from Jesus. They are simply called the beatitudes because they are attitudes that we are called to be. This is what living in the kingdom of God looks like. Being and taking on these particular attitudes, behaviors and ways of living a kingdom focused life during our stay here on earth.

The first of these teachings started in verse 3, “blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” And the last verse of the beatitudes ends with verse 10, “blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

One of the things you see these two verse have in common is “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The beginning of the teachings of Jesus starts and ends with possessing the kingdom of heaven.

Now remember, we are not talking just about heaven as a place where we go after this life is over. It is this but I believe Jesus is also saying there are many kingdom blessings that are ours in this life. You can go online to our web-site and find the sermon from verse three and read

about the blessings of having the kingdom of heaven operating in your life during your stay on earth.

Jesus gives us the keys to the kingdom of heaven and the keys to heavenly blessings are His teachings.

Jesus' teachings are the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

And if you remember, operating in humility,

Being poor in spirit, realizing you have need and coming to Jesus, this is the master key that unlocks and positions us to receive all the other heavenly kingdom keys available to us.

Back to our teaching for today. The verse we are looking at is a pivotal verse in the passage. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied."

The first three beatitudes actually lead up to having a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Think about these verses for a second.

3. Basis for a hunger and thirst for righteousness

Vs. 3 Realizing you are poverty-stricken in your spirit

Vs. 4 Mourning over your sin, the sin of the world and the misery it creates

Vs. 5 Being meek, ready to receive instruction without defensiveness

Having these attitudes are good to ways to live but they lack the fullness of what Jesus has in mind for us.

After pronouncing a blessing upon those who recognize their emptiness and grieve over it, Jesus now makes a transition from being in a place of grieving to a place of fullness. You hunger and thirst for righteousness, I

have the answer. Come to me and you will be satisfied. You will be filled up.

The person is no longer broken, sorrowful and meek, they are now actively involved with Jesus and Jesus begins to fill them up with Himself. In verses 7,8, 9 & 10, Jesus begins to show what it means to be filled with His righteousness.

Can you see the structure of this teaching? The first four beatitudes describe a person who is broken, grieving, quiet and hungering for righteousness. The next four beatitudes describe the person who is merciful, pure and a peacemaker. This gives a partial glimpse of what it means to operate in righteousness, right living with God.

We were empty, hungry, thirsty but now we filled, sated as Jesus states in verse 6. Think about what being filled looks like in verses 7-10.

In verse 7 you will be filled with mercy, blessed with an abundance of mercy, overflowing with mercy.

In verse 8, purity is where your heart will begin to operate. And guess what the blessing if that is? You will see God. Your eyes will be opened wider and wider, your focus becomes more enlightened to see God in all of His glory and to see Him operating in you and in the people and world around you.

Verse 9, not only will you be a peaceful person, having a peace about you, but you will begin to see that you have become a peacemaker. You see things happening around you and you seek to make peace with others and between others.

And lastly verse 10, you will be persecuted for the acts of righteousness. As you begin to show mercy some will see it as a sign of weakness. As you walk in purity, others will be uncomfortable because they want to live in their sin and not have any light shone on them. As you seek to be

a peacemaker, some will reject your offer of reconciliation. As you operate in the righteousness that Jesus has placed inside of you, you will be persecuted.

We will look at these attributes of righteousness over the next couple of weeks. But Jesus is pretty plainly saying you will be persecuted for living lives that exhibit these attributes of righteousness. Again, we will look this teaching in depth in a few weeks.

4. According to Jesus, being satisfied with a hunger and thirst for righteousness means that Jesus will lead us and empower us to operate in mercy, purity and peacemaking

One of the reasons I felt God wanted me to preach through the teachings of Jesus is because of the world we are living in today and will be living in in the days to come. Can you see how the attributes Jesus wants to impart to you will come into play in these days? Mercy, purity and peacemaking. The very things the world is lacking in these days.

I believe that Jesus is calling out the church. I believe that Jesus is calling each of you out.

He is saying that many of you are sensing a hunger and thirst in these days. Change has occurred and will be ongoing for the next several months or longer. You stand amid the challenge of today and Jesus is asking, what are you going to fill that hunger and thirst with.

Isaiah 42:6, “I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness.”

Such an incredible statement. While this was a promise to the nation of Israel, I believe this is a promise for us today as well. I have called you in righteousness. God didn't say work on your righteousness or strive to be righteous. What He said was I, the Lord your God have called you into righteousness. I am going to make it happen. I made it happen through My Son Jesus. You are right with Me because of His

forgiveness and as you continue to walk with Jesus in hunger then I am going to satisfy you by releasing even more of My power from heaven, pouring My righteousness in you and through you.

Wow, what a blessing from the hand of our God. Its no wonder this passage says blessed are those over and over again.

To have the power of mercy, purity and peace operating through us, it doesn't get any better than this.

But remember the flow Jesus teaches us.

Vs. 3 Realizing you are poverty-stricken in your spirit

Vs. 4 Mourning over your sin, the sin of the world and the misery it creates

Vs. 5 Being meek, ready to receive instruction without defensiveness

This is the path to greater blessings. This is the path to creating a hunger and thirst for righteousness. And this is the path to being satisfied by the hand of our God by the filling of mercy, purity and peacemaking.

Let us all think on Jesus' words and pray for our own hearts today.

Let's pray