

## **Hungering and Thirsting For God (Matthew 5:6)**

This morning we're going to be in Matthew 5 which is the passage I've been teaching on Sunday evenings. We'll return to Gen 48 next week but today's communion message will be Mt 5:6. I'll keep going in Mt 5 Sunday nights, maybe another communion AM. I really wish all or most of you can be with us in that beatitudes series and hope this whets your appetite for more as we study a beatitude all about your spiritual appetite/cravings. v. 6: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

In OT narratives sometimes I'll do a whole chapter in a message, or half a chapter in the case of Gen 48, but when you come to some of the words of our Lord Jesus, especially in this sermon that changed the world (Mt 5-7), there's also value in slowing down to digest individual verses more deeply. Before we continue our study in Genesis and before we come to the Lord's Table this morning where we eat of the bread and drink of the cup, it's good for us in God's providence in this next verse in our beatitude study, to think more deeply on what the bread and cup symbolize in our hunger and thirst for the Lord and His Word, the source of our righteousness and life in Him.

[Are you desiring God? Are you satisfied with Christ?]

If you're not there, how do you get there? I think/hope this passage helps us. I think there's a progression in these beatitudes: If you start out in v. 3 poor in spirit, or it could be translated as "a spiritual beggar," then when you get to v. 6 it's natural for you to be hungering for what you've been begging for. The mourning of v. 4 in context would be mourning over sin, like in Bible times people would mourn publically in sackcloth and ashes beside a road along with the beggars. 'Blessed are those who mourn their sins and repent' is what Jesus is saying in v. 4 (4:17 says this was the focus of His message).

This also flows into v. 6, someone who mourns the righteousness in their life they lack, will then hunger and thirst for that righteousness they lack. In v. 5 the meek or humble know their need and long for God to meet it in v. 6. Spiritual beggars and repenters who are humble and hungry God will satisfy

### Outline:

1. The Setting
2. The Spiritual Craving
3. The Satisfying
4. The Self-Examining

### **So let's start with The Setting**

It's important to see the context and the kind of righteousness we're to seek.

Look back at 4:1: *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness [or 'desert'] to be tempted by the devil.* <sup>2</sup> *And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry* [same word as 5:6, which helps define it as the desperation of starvation]. <sup>3</sup> *And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."* <sup>4</sup> *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD...'*

So in the chapter before He says '*blessed are the hungry for righteousness ... for they shall be satisfied,*' Jesus practices what He preaches by a greater hunger for the righteousness found in God's Word. He is satisfied with the Scripture, so He refuses to satisfy His fleshly hunger in unrighteous ways. There's much more there, but I just want you to see hungering is starving, and Jesus uses that to speak of a more important hunger for God's Word. The word "thirst" was also used by Jesus when he was dehydrated, dying on the cross, Jesus said "*I thirst*" (John 19:28, same Greek word as Matt. 5:6). In both cases, it's someone who would die if they continued in that state, it's a sense of desperation. This is severe starvation and dehydration spiritually.

William Barclay translates Matthew 5:6 this way: 'O the bliss of the man who longs for total righteousness as a starving man longs for food, and a man perishing of thirst longs for water, for that man will be truly satisfied'

Now look at Matthew 6:33 to help define righteousness: "*But seek first His kingdom and **His righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you.*" It's another way to say "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*" - "*seek first God's righteousness,*" i.e., above all else, seek the righteousness of God and His kingdom in your daily life. It says "*all these things will be added*"--what things? In v. 31 it's the needs of daily life, what we eat and what we drink. So in the same context of the same sermon, Jesus talks about things we seek to satisfy our hunger and thirst, but first or foremost, *seek His righteousness* - *seek it first* is another way to describe the strong *hunger or thirst* in Mt 5:6

I think this is a key concept in the context to help us understand the spiritual hungering and thirsting for righteousness in Mt 5:6. It's our daily need just like we're to pray for our daily bread in Mt 6:11, we're to pray in the next verse for God to forgive us as we forgive others. That's righteousness being applied in prayer and in the practice of our life towards others in sin against us. To starve for or seek first His kingdom and righteousness is like in 6:10, longing for His kingdom to come and His will to be done in our daily lives.

It can't be just Christ's righteousness in salvation, it's daily transformation also that we're to seek first every day after we're saved, righteous living, too --not just *legal* righteousness in justification, *living* rightly, or sanctification. The bigger context is about *true righteous living vs. false righteous living* of Pharisees (5:20, 6:1). The immediate context of 5:6 is clear it's not hunger and thirst for salvation; you must have salvation for this hunger and thirst.

**5:1** *When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying ...* [so v. 6 is part of what He's saying to His followers]

The beatitudes are not an 8-step program, 8 things you must do to be saved, they're 8 ways to describe the saved, or 8 blessings for those who are saved. It's also true that Jesus knows there is a large crowd listening as He teaches His disciples, and they could have heard Him from faraway on mountains around Galilee. When I was on my Israel trip, seeing the dry deserts, having thirst in ways we don't here, being at the Mt. of Beatitudes, made this alive.

So that's some of the setting. Remember He's teaching the disciples, v. 1-2. Those who know this righteousness in salvation will long for it in their life. Only those who are saved can know the blessedness and satisfaction of v. 6. Lewis: 'if I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.' Or to say it another way, spiritual hunger and thirst is a sign of spiritual life. In Luke 8:54 Jesus took a dead girl *'by the hand and called, saying, "Child, arise!"*<sup>55</sup> *And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat* [she's alive and so needs to eat]. If you're alive spiritually, you need to eat spiritually, and you will know it.

### **This takes us from #1. The Setting, to #2. The Spiritual Craving**

It's possible to be alive but not have a strong appetite (like when you're sick) but one way to tell you're becoming healthy again is your hunger and thirst. The more you hunger and thirst, the more you grow in God's righteousness, which is different than man's righteousness, self-righteousness, mere rules.

**5:20** *"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.* [so Jesus explains in v. 21-22 it's not external righteousness, it's a heart righteousness that we're to hunger after. And in v. 23 part of thirsting after righteousness in this chapter is longing for and pursuing righteousness in right worship]

<sup>23</sup> “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. [that's the righteousness of living right with fellow believers, doing what we can to reconcile as possible, as it depends on us to be at peace, Rom. 12 says, another context about worship]

Hypocritical self-righteousness is content to have anger and un-forgiveness, and sin un-dealt with, but true righteousness longs for right relationships in the fellowship of Christ's followers, because it craves right worship of God. In this context and others, hunger is language for desiring God's Word with a desire to take it in and make it apart of us, to apply it in righteous living.

Jeremiah says much the same: *'Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart...'* (Jer. 15:16)  
Listen to Job: *'I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food'* (Job 23:12)  
Jesus spoke of Himself and His Word as the bread of life for all hungering.

In many places, the hunger Jesus speaks of is hunger for the Word of God, and thirsting is language of longing for God Himself, often public worship  
Turn to Ps 42, which many think Jesus draws from to explain this thirsting. When a Samaritan woman asked about proper worship Jesus used the image of Himself as living water that can truly satisfy a soul (John 4:10-27). Jesus drew that image or language from Jeremiah 2:13 where God says *'They've forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.'* [context is their empty worship]

Psalm 42 gives a positive example of thirsting for God in heartfelt worship. Look at Ps 42:1 *'As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. <sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? ... <sup>4</sup> These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the multitude and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving...'*

Notice his soul is thirsting for God, he's longing to be in the house of God. He craves the worship of God with the people of God in the house of God, or in NT terms, in church. You've heard of preaching to the choir...this guy misses the preaching and the choir and wants it again. He's saying like an animal pants for water, so my soul thirsts for God in His house, the church.

When can I be there again, he asks, to be with a multitude of worshippers? If he could be there again any day or night for more worship, he'd be there. Now turn to Ps 63. This really came alive to me seeing Judah's wilderness.

Psalm 63 *A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.* <sup>1</sup> *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.* <sup>2</sup> *Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.* [Notice again his soul thirsting for God has to do with the sanctuary, with the OT equivalent of the church] <sup>3</sup> *Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.* <sup>4</sup> *So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.* <sup>5</sup> *My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips* [worship context]

Blessed are those who thirst, for they shall be satisfied as they worship. In the NKJV after he says his soul thirsts for God like in a dry weary land, v. 2 says "*so I have looked for You in the sanctuary...*" As he thirsts for God he looks for God in the sanctuary and his soul is satisfied when he praises God there. If you come to this sanctuary here Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, whenever, as a thirsty man in a desert, seeking God's love that's better than life, if you aren't satisfied to just praise God once or just 1 morning, if you long for more of Him, He can satisfy you in the sanctuary. Turn to Ps 84.

Psalm 84:1 (NIV84) *How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!* <sup>2</sup> *My soul yearns, even faints, **for the courts of the LORD...*** [he's longing for the courts of God's house -- why does he want to be in the sanctuary? He says in the end of v. 2] *my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God ...* <sup>4</sup> *Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you ...* [look at v. 10] *Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere...*

[do you know any of that hunger, thirst or desire for church, for worship?]

That's someone who hungers and thirsts for the courts of God, the church of God of their day. It was called God's dwelling place in the OT, and he saw it as lovely, his heart and flesh cried out for it. Blessed are those who dwell in it, v. 4 says, who linger and love, spending a day in it is better than 1,000 anywhere else. Spending a day with God and His people was his heart cry. Coming back to worship was no bore or chore, his soul yearned for more.

[this is behind our desire for a 2nd service opportunity to worship God more]

We ask our elders and deacons to be here in the evenings if providentially not hindered, but it's not just our desire for a few or leaders. I know not all can make it all the time, not all can be in worship as much as they desire.

But desire is more important than duty in these psalms, not to score brownie points or get another notch on your belt (or AWANA vest), but a desiring, hungering, thirsting for righteousness. Moving beyond Sunday, tomorrow through Saturday, are you hungry for God's Word and thirsty for God in the morning or evening or whenever you can? Do you want to listen to sermons or worshipful music? Those aren't substitutes for corporate worship, psalms describe something special about God's house, but we need supplemental daily nourishment. Mt 5:6 speaks to desires and motivates with satisfaction.

[not in terms of mere duty or drudgery, but delight, fulfillment]

**Mt 5:6 moves from Spiritual Craving, to #3. Satisfying** [re-quote verse]

Look at Ps 81, another illustration of Mt 5:6 in a worship context (v. 1-2):

*<sup>10</sup> "I, the LORD, am your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide and I will fill it...[v. 16] **I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, And with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.**"*

Again in the context of worship, God promises He will satisfy the one who hungers and thirsts. If you open wide your mouth, God will fill and satisfy. As we come to worship God in v. 1, if we come hungry as v. 10 says, with mouths open for God, God will satisfy us with His best food as v. 16 says. Moses brought water from a rock to satisfy the thirst of Israel in the desert, but God promises better for His people: honey from the rock to satisfy us. If that's your heart's desire, morning or evening or whenever, He'll satisfy.

Now turn to Psalm 107, another desert psalm with hungering and thirsting. Look at Ps 107:4 *They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region; They did not find a way to an inhabited city.* <sup>5</sup> *They were hungry and thirsty; Their soul fainted within them.* <sup>6</sup> *Then they cried out to the LORD...* [v. 9 says God] *satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good* [same language as Mt 5:6, hunger and thirst and God satisfies them]

In v. 32 the context is corporate congregational worship: <sup>32</sup> *Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people, And praise Him at the seat of the elders.* <sup>33</sup> *He changes rivers into a wilderness And springs of water into a thirsty ground ...* <sup>35</sup> *He changes a wilderness into a pool of water And a dry land into springs of water;* <sup>36</sup> *And there He makes the hungry to dwell...*

[not only true of public worship, it applies to private worship, too]

Ps 17 makes clear the satisfaction in craving righteousness is God Himself. Listen to what David says in Ps 17:15: *'As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake'* [this craving for righteousness is only fully satisfied by Christ's likeness in glory]

Jesus promises satisfaction for all who crave righteousness/Christ-likeness. The blessedness of Mt 5:6 for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness has its roots in the psalms and also its promise "*for they shall be satisfied.*"

- Ps 103 says as we worship or '*bless the Lord O my soul...He **satisfies your desires** with good things.*' As we bless Him with His people, we're blessed.
- Ps 65:4 *How **blessed** is the one whom You choose and bring near to You to dwell in Your courts. We will be **satisfied** with the goodness of Your house...*
- Ps 36:8 *ESV They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life ...*

I think Jesus draws from that language when He talks about abundant life or satisfying our hunger in Him in John 6, satisfying our thirst in Him, John 7:  
<sup>37</sup>... "*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.*" <sup>38</sup> "*He who believes in Me ... 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'*"

This is **the Satisfying, #3, and it takes us to point #4. the Self-Examining** Paul writes: '*a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not discern the body rightly*' (1 Cor 11:28-29)

[bread=His body/life, the bread of life for all who hunger]

Before we eat and drink, it's good to examine our spiritual hunger and thirst. Where are we (where am I) in craving more righteousness, Christ-likeness? My desire is that more of you would have more of a desire and hunger for more Christ, His Word, His worship, and fellowship, at your house or God's house. It can start tonight at 5 pm at a fellowship meal and another message. Or at our brown bag fellowship lunch after this service, I pray you stimulate one another to love and good deeds (which is part of righteousness in v. 6).

[our tastebuds and cravings need help to be stirred up]

Not just today or this evening, how is your hunger on weekday mornings? As you wake up, maybe you crave coffee ... do you thirst for God? Are you eager to get on Facebook, but not eager to seek God's face in this Book? Do you crave Pinterest, but for prayer you have no interest (or very little)? Are you addicted to gaming (or for us older guys, maybe our gadgets or phones we can't go long without), but can we go a long time without God's Word?

[it's searching to consider what we're craving most in light of Mt 5:6, 6:33]

There is a blessedness that comes with hungering and thirsting for deeper fellowship and worship, corporately and individually, and even as we share meals together like tonight, it can remind us of these spiritual analogies. It's good for us to consider where our appetites and affections are. It's good to examine ourselves, as Scripture calls us to every time before communion.

Corinthians also says "*examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith.*" If you can't relate to ever having a God-produced hunger in your life for God's Word, or a thirst or craving to worship God, there's no biblical assurance I can give you that you're in the faith. Some need conversion, not communion today, spiritual life. Ask God to give you hunger and thirst only He satisfies

Isa 55 '*Every one who thirsts, come to the waters...you who have no money, come...Why 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...Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way [repent] And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.'*

That's the Lord's call to all till the very end of the Bible: "*let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.*"

[it's a free gift you can't pay for or earn, come as a thirsty dying beggar]

Not everyone is to come to the Lord's Table but everyone is to come to the Lord in faith. Some of you may need to start there. Others need to come to the waters of baptism, which should normally be the first step of obedience after you come to Christ. If you haven't yet, we can talk afterwards. Fathers of children becoming young adults interested in it, we can talk afterwards. Communion isn't for little kids, there's a level of maturity implied in the text '*let a man first examine himself...*' a regular self-examination and confession independent of parents. There's a level of discernment needed to '*discern the body rightly*' as it says. But even for adults or young adults, it's not for those in unrepentant sin or who refuse to forgive or follow Scripture like Mt 5:23. Self-examination involves confession and a commitment to obey before this

What if you're convicted your hunger or thirst is weak? Come to the Table! The Lord's Table is not for righteous people, it's those who know their need. But first examine your heart, confess your lack of desire, ask for God's help. A doctor may ask in a health examination how, and what you're eating, and how much water you're drinking to diagnose what's wrong with your health. I think Jesus as the Great Physician examines our spiritual health in Mt 5:6 as someone who cares for our best, our blessedness, and soul's satisfaction. It may seem painful at times as the Physician examines us, but the spiritual probing and testing of our heart is for our health and happiness/blessedness.

What's His prescription? Come to Him as the bread of life and living water.



The Lord said the bread we eat and cup we drink is to be in remembrance of Him and to proclaim His death until He comes again. It reminds us our love for Him and longing for righteousness is never enough, that's why we need Jesus to fulfill all righteousness for us, to love God enough for us, to live a life of hunger and thirst for us, to die for us, so the Father could be satisfied. Our longing for righteousness, our love isn't enough, we need Christ's love. The promise of Mt 5:6 is those who hunger or thirst for this "*shall be filled*" (NKJV). The prayer of Ephesians 3:19 is "*to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*"

Let's pray that. Study Ps 119's prayers, it goes from affliction or apathy to great affection and appetite for God's Word. 1 Pet 2 tells us to repent of sin in our life that spoils our appetite like spiritual junk food, and '*long for the pure milk of the Word like a baby longs for milk, that by it you may grow...*'

If you don't long for these things enough, but you *long to long for them* as Jesus taught, that's a start. And let's pray in communion God grows it more. Before I pray I want to give a time for each to pray individually to the Lord

Thank you Lord. There's a song I want us to sing acapella before I pray, and it *is* a prayer right out of Ps 42, 'as the deer.' Make it your prayer as we sing, and if the words aren't true of your heart, pray as you sing for God's help to.

As the deer panteth for the water, So my soul longeth after Thee  
You alone are my heart's desire, And I long to worship Thee ... Only You can satisfy  
You alone are the real joy giver and the apple of my eye ... [let's sing it as our prayer]

Let's pray, and as I pray I'll ask the men to prepare in the back as we prepare