

I invite you to open your bibles this morning to today's scripture text which can be found in Matthew, the 5th chapter, verses 1 – 9. This is our fourth week in our seven-week series on the beatitudes, Jesus's sermon on the mount. Today our focus is on those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Mt 5:1-9 5 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

NIV

Some of the most thought and emotion evoking words in the old testament can be found in the book of Ecclesiastes. In the 3rd chapter verses 11-13 it is declared 11 God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. 12 I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. 13 That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil — this is the gift of God.

What does this mean? That God has put eternity in our hearts, and withheld from you a vision of the beginning to the end in your mind that might satisfy that? Augustine puts it like this, “We were made for thee oh God, and our hearts are restless, until they find their rest in thee.” Jerimiah put it like this, he said, in Jer 2:13 My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. So, there is a longing. An unsatisfied, inconsolable longing.

A poem from George Herbert called *the pulley*, clearly expresses why there is an inconsolable longing in your heart today. (read poem THE PULLEY)

God has put eternity in our hearts. There is an inconsolable longing in every human soul. We vainly make every attempt conceivable to satisfy this longing with many things of this world. With scenic vacations, accomplishments of creativity, cinematic stunning productions, exploits of the flesh, national sports extravaganzas, hallucinogenic drugs, the pursuit of managerial excellence, shopping for the latest electronic gadgets, and on and on and on. Yet, the longing remains.

We read about an invitation into the abundant life in the book of Isaiah in the 55th chapter beginning in the 1st verse "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?"

Many of us here this morning, have a deep soul longing. Our heart is hungry; for something. Everywhere we look, the grass is greener than where we stand. The sad thing is that many of us, instead of hearing that; has the beckoning of God to come home and to drink at the fountain of living waters, we turn away from that beckoning, to worldly pleasures; alcohol, drugs, tanning parlors, new toys, and everything turns to ashes in your hands. The thrill of lust leaves the sentiment of guilt, and loneliness. The drugs and the alcohol can't keep you from

waking up in the real-world, morning after morning to the messed-up relationships. The tan looks so artificial and fades so quickly. The new toy, whether it's a computer, a new phone, or a hi-fi; boredom city in several weeks. Ash's is all you have left when you drink from broken cisterns that cannot satisfy.

So more and more the words of C.S. Lewis come true, "If I find within myself a desire, which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

Jesus has something to say to us about this universal experience of an inconsolable longing. He has something to say about the insatiable hunger of the human heart, and about the relentless thirst of our soul.

His words are found in today's scripture, Matthew 5:6 where he says, "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.**"

As it has been revealed to us these last few weeks in these beatitudes, we continue to discover the truth about the blessedness of the Christian life. That it is a great blessing to be a follower of Jesus Christ. So here, we have revealed to us, the fourth characteristic of being a Christian; one who longs for righteousness. The Christian longs for righteousness in his own life of course, but also for his family, and his community, and his country.

He longs for righteousness to be seen everywhere. In other words, we as Christians, are to be those who love righteousness and we want to see it manifested everywhere.

When our Lord uses the language of hungering and thirsting he uses an image that is very much relatable to us. If there is anything any of us can connect with is our need for food and water. The fact is that very few of us in modern conditions of life know what it is to be really hungry or really thirsty. However, in the ancient world, that was very different. A working man's wage was the equivalent of three pence a day, and, even making every allowance for the difference in the purchasing power of money, no man ever got fat on that wage, and in Palestine the working man and the day laborer were never far from the border-line of real hunger and actual starvation. They were lucky if they could afford meat one day a week.

It was even more so in the case of thirst. It wasn't possible for the vast majority of people to turn a tap and find the clear, cold water pouring into their house. If you found yourself on a journey, and in the midst of it the hot wind which brought the sand-storm might begin to blow. There was nothing for you to do but wrap your head in your loose hooded cloak, turn your back to the wind, and wait, while the swirling sand filled your nostrils and your throat until you were likely to suffocate,

and until you were parched with an overbearing thirst. In the conditions of modern western life there is no parallel at all to that.

So, then, the hunger which this beatitude describes is no genteel hunger which could be satisfied with a mid-morning snack; the thirst of which it speaks of is no thirst which could be satisfied with a cup of coffee or an iced drink. Thankfully, many of us, by God's blessings, have never gone without a meal unless we have planned it, usually. We receive abundant provision from God. Despite all that, we can still relate to hungering and thirsting, right? Many of us throw around the word starving too much, "I'm Starving! What's for dinner?" Which we are NOT. But never the less we do hunger, we do thirst.

The hunger which this beatitude describes, is the hunger of a person who is starving for food, and the thirst of a person who will die unless they drink. So, this picture of hungering and thirsting for righteousness expresses the insatiable desire we should have for the things of God. This is what we should be doing when it comes to righteousness, longing for it, desiring it, thinking about it, seeking it. So, in effect this beatitude is essentially a challenge that asks us "How much do you want goodness?" Do you want it as much as a starving person wants food, and as much as a person dying of thirst wants water? How intense is our desire for righteousness, for goodness?

So, what is emphasized in this beatitude is the longing for a growth in sanctified righteousness. That is, we want the work of the holy spirit to create a holiness in our hearts and in our lives.

There is one thing that is worth pointing out in this beatitude, that is, that dead people don't hunger. Dead people don't have any hunger or thirst, do they? So, if there is a hunger and a thirst for these things it is a sign of life in you. Praise God you're alive if you hunger and thirst for righteousness. Even if you're parched and starved and lacking these things, at least your heart is beating and you sense the need for righteousness. You have that seed of spiritual righteousness in you, you're looking for food. That, is a good sign. This is a sign of the work of the spirit in us, if we hunger and we thirst after goodness and righteousness. So, we should give thanks to God if he has given us an appetite for these things. This is the appetite that we want as Christians.

So, how do we encourage a spiritual hunger? How do we encourage that hungering and thirsting that we so desperately need? Well, an important axiom that we all learned from our parents when we were kids, is that if we eat a bunch of sweets we aren't going to be hungry for the food that we really need. Right?

Eat a bunch of candy and you aren't going to be hungry for the foods that are really good for you; the food that will bring you the nourishment you require to be healthy. The food that will actually satisfy you and help you.

Similarly, if you feed upon the delights of the world, of the things of the world, if you hunger after those things, then your sense of spiritual hunger and thirst will be very dull. It won't be very evident. It won't be very strong. So, when we hunger after the things of the world, then we won't hunger and thirst after the things of God as we should. That's why the Apostle Paul tells us [Col 3:1-4](#) So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your *life is revealed*, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. So, we avoid the sweets, we avoid the sugary and fatty foods of the world that would dull our appetite that we should have for the things of God.

Secondly, we need to *exercise* our spiritual appetites. 1 Tim 4:7 tells us about the discipline that we should have in seeking godliness, the Apostle Paul tells us,

7 ... discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; 8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. 10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. 11 Prescribe and teach these things.

It is very important to observe; if we look at all the Christian biographies over the years. Looking closely at the lives of these men and women who follow our Lord Jesus Christ. You will see that the consistent component in their lives is that they *hungered*, and *thirsted*, for **righteousness**. That they were people that dedicated themselves to the word of God, and to prayer. Who is it that desires the word of God the most, but the people that are in the word of God the most. Who is it that desires to pray the most, but the people that are engaged in prayer the most. For example, you have Martin Luther that said, “four hours a day of prayer just may not be enough especially on a hard day. I need even more.” He had that sense of need because he was dedicating himself to the work of God. He had exercised himself in Godliness. Another well know Christian who was constantly hungering and thirsting after the things of God, after our Lords righteousness, and knew all too well of the satisfaction of his provisions was David.

When we read one of his most well know psalms it is all too clear of this fact. Hearing the words of David, in the 23rd Psalm versus 1-3

23 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

God provides all of our physical needs, all of our spiritual need!

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,

God will satisfy us with the best of foods, and the best of spiritual sustenance!

he leads me beside quiet waters,

God will satisfy our thirst with the living waters!

3 he restores my soul.

Complete satisfaction and restoration will result from Gods care!

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

We will be LED into righteousness if we but SEEK HIM ERNESTLY!

Similarly, brothers and sisters, we must *exercise ourselves* in these disciplines. By daily reading of our Bible, by constantly seeking God in prayer. By doing so our spiritual appetite will be trained and honed so that we will sense what we really need.

The blessing that Jesus tells us here in our fourth beatitude, for those that hunger and thirst for righteousness; they *will* be *satisfied*. Spiritual hunger, Spiritual thirst will be satisfied. When a shepherd leads his sheep into the green pasture to feed them, to satisfy their hunger,

they literally feed them until they are gorged. Completely filled and satisfied by supplying their food in abundance. This is not just a partial feeding it is the complete satisfaction that can only be achieved by seeking Jesus Christ, our shepherd. The Greek word for satisfy, the filling of your hunger, **chortazo** (khor-tad'-zo) means *to gorge (supply food in abundance): - feed, fill, satisfy*. So, when we hunger and thirst for righteousness, our Lord will not leave you, our God will not forsake you. He won't leave you hanging. He will feed you until you are completely satisfied. We can find a prime example of this in the old testament in Psalm 81. In this psalm, this is God speaking to the children of Israel, he is talking about how they were stubborn, how they didn't harken to the word, they weren't listening, they weren't seeking after righteousness. So, he holds out this promise to them, if they would but turn to him. From Psalm 81:11-16 he says Ps 81:11

11 "But My people did not listen to My voice, And Israel did not obey Me. 12 "So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices. 13 "Oh that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways! 14 "I would quickly subdue their enemies And turn My hand against their adversaries. 15 "Those who hate the Lord would pretend obedience to Him, And their time of punishment would be forever. 16 "But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, And with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

Our Lord God holds out this promise to his people if they would but harken to his voice, they would have received the finest of wheat, the honey from the rock. They would have been fed. They would have been satisfied. It's the same promise that our Lord Jesus Christ holds out to us. If we hunger and thirst for righteousness God has the very best of things in store for us. He has the very best food. The thing that we need more than anything else. So, brothers and sisters if we will harken to the word of God, if we will dedicate ourselves to the pursuit of these things, our Lord promises to satisfy us with the fruits of righteousness. In these fruits of righteousness, we will find total satisfaction, we will find enjoyment, we will find blessings. That hunger and thirst that Jesus talks about will not go unfed. This is his promise to us.

Oh Father in Heaven we thank you for these promises,
that if we hunger and thirst for you we will be fed with the finest of food.
We ask that you will give *us* this spiritual appetite,
that see's these things; seeking you, reading our bible, and prayer,
as most important.
and that we would pursue them with whole-hearted diligence,
that we would exercise ourselves, so that we will have an appetite
for things that are good and true and lovely and pure.

THE PULLEY

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by—
Let us (said he) pour on him all we can;
Let the world's riches which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.
So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone, of all His treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.
For if I should (said He)
Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me,
And rest in nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast.