

"Blessed Are The Hungry" Matthew 5:6

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[0 : 0 0] So we're slowly making our way through the Beatitudes every time that I preach here. The Beatitudes are these pronouncements of unexpected fullness in places that the world would say are empty.

And the Beatitudes, we said, they occur within a context. They occur within the most famous sermon ever preached, what the church has historically called the Sermon on the Mount. And a good question to understand the Beatitudes and to understand the Sermon on the Mount is to simply ask, who's the audience?

Who is Jesus speaking to? Now, there's kind of two different answers to that. One, if you remember when Stephen read in verse 1 of chapter 5, you can see that Jesus sees the crowds.

And what does it say he does? It says he goes up on the mountain and he sits down. And who comes to him? His disciples. And so some people will say that the Sermon on the Mount, these Beatitudes, are for Jesus' disciples.

It's a sermon. It's a message for his followers. And that's true because to understand these Beatitudes, they're not this just general description of the entire world, but for those who have come to the king.

[1 : 1 1] Remember, Jesus' message is repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is at hand. That means the king has come. So it's those who have come to the king. Right? But also, if you go to the very end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7, verses 28 through 29, it says, when Jesus finished saying all these things, the crowds were astonished at his teaching.

For he was teaching as one who had authority and not as their scribes. So in a way, the crowds have actually been listening in some way. And I don't know exactly what it looked like if the disciples were closer and the crowds were further away.

Or it's just Matthew's way of saying anybody who's followed Jesus and is listening in. But there's this greater multitude around him. And the reason I mention that is if you go through the Gospel of Matthew, it actually draws this distinction a few times between the crowds and the disciples.

And the way that he talks about it is those who hear and those who hear and understand. So there's this wide sense that the Sermon on the Mount, these Beatitudes, are for everyone to hear.

This is an invitation to come and find the fullness of God. And yet there's also a narrower sense in that it's for those who've repented and come and bent the knee to the King.

[2 : 3 1] So, if you're here this morning and either one of those describe you, if you know Jesus and you know what it is to feed on his grace, I want you to listen and understand.

But also, maybe you've been around the church for a while. Maybe you haven't quite had the time yet or felt the conviction in your heart to bend the knee in allegiance and to publicly identify and attach yourself with Christ.

What better time than to respond, not just here, but to hear and to take it in. We're going to be taking the Lord's Supper next week. And so it would be a great time to come and to profess Christ, to be baptized, and then to come and eat the meal that he feeds his people.

And that's what we're going to be talking about this morning, this beatitude in Matthew 5, 6, that talks about hunger and thirst and a God who feeds. Let me pray for us, though, before we look at the text more closely.

Lord, you know that we're hungry people. We're hungry for love. We're hungry for joy. We're hungry for purpose. We're hungry for rest. We simply ask that as your word is proclaimed, that you would stir up a deep hunger and thirst within us.

[3 : 46] And would you meet us there with the food and living water of your grace and truth. We ask this in the name of the bread of life. Amen. One of the fun things about moving to a new country is the new food.

And not just any type of new food. Sometimes it's new combinations of food. Food that we have in America, but you guys put them together in such a lovely way. Our middle child, she came home a couple months ago from nursery, singing the praises of the best food in the world she's ever tasted, which she told us was butter on crackers.

I have put butter on toast before. Never put butter on crackers. Sounds great. Why not, right? Sounds delicious. So, yeah, it's like after teaching the kids about a well-balanced diet at nursery, it's like, hey, let's put some fat on some carbs and stick it in your mouth.

And she was like, this is the good life. Dad, if you want to know about the good life, come eat butter on crackers. Of course. Our daughter would like to thank your country for this. So, after, you know, and after discovering the joy of this delicacy, my middle daughter with utter delight, she wanted to make this at home, right?

So I got the crackers out, or water biscuits, I don't know what we call them. And I spread the butter on top, and I hand it, and she's biting it, and like the crumbs are like flying out of her mouth, and she's saying, oh, Dad, you have to try this.

[5 : 14] This is like the best food ever. She asks for it all the time. I asked her yesterday, do they still give you butter on crackers for snacks? And she's like, no, I wish. It was only like one time.

I loved it so much. What do you want when you're hungry? What do you want when you're hungry? You see, every single person, we have hunger and thirst within us.

It's this universal experience. You know what it's like to desire food and to desire drink and to have that desire met and satisfied. And because of that unique, common human experience, the Bible uses this metaphor of hunger and thirst to connect it to our need and our dependence of God and how he actually desires to enter in and to fill us and to meet us where we are.

And it also talks about what's gone wrong with the world because of sin. In a way, the Bible asks is, what's your buttered cracker in life? What do you long for?

What do you go to in order to satisfy your cravings? And the answer to that question tells you a lot about yourself. It tells you a lot about what you think about God, what it means to be a disciple, what it means to be a good person in this world, what it means to pursue the flourishing life.

[6 : 37] In this beatitude, Jesus says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. So some translations say, for they shall be filled.

I promise no buttered crackers, but maybe something even better. Our outline is the two questions we've been using to look at every one of these beatitudes. First off, what does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness?

And then secondly, what's the promise attached to it? What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness? And then secondly, what's the promise attached to it? So first off, what does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness?

And I'm going to actually break that question into two parts. First, what does it mean to hunger and thirst? And then secondly, what's the kind of righteousness that Jesus is talking about? So hungering and thirsting.

One of the things Jesus is identifying here is quite simply this fact. We are hungry and thirsty people. Hunger and thirst. It's another way to talk about our desire.

[7 : 36] And I want you to understand this. To desire, to hunger and to thirst isn't because sin is in this world. You were created for hunger and thirst.

What's gone wrong in the Garden of Eden? The problem wasn't that Ab and Eve were hungry. The problem was what they used to satisfy their hunger and their thirst. Right? They were created to hunger for God.

And for God to commune with them and to fill them. That was the thing that was supposed to give them the most meaning. And everything out of this world was in relation to that. And instead, they go to these created things and want them to fill them over the Creator.

It hasn't changed one bit. Right? What we all try to fill and satisfy us. And so now our appetites are warped. So thirsty, we go and we drink salt water.

And it just ends up dehydrating us. Hungry, it's like we go and we try to fill ourselves with candy floss. It dissipates in a moment and it leaves us feeling gross. Research shows that fast food, it shuts off the alarm system in our bodies that tells us that we've had enough to eat.

[8 : 48] So what's the result? You stuff your face with McDonald's, hunger and thirst, and you're not actually satisfied. We crave it then. It kind of gets inside of us. We crave it, especially with sugars and things like that.

And so we want to go after the stuff that actually isn't going to fill us and be good for us. Even in some research, it says the effect is so powerful that a cheeseburger eaten today can be responsible for the feeling of hunger three days later.

Story of my life, right? Tastes delicious. But don't feel great afterwards. There's this comedian named Jim Gaffigan and he's got this bit on McDonald's at the end.

He's got this really poignant line. He says, we all struggle with McDonald's of the soul. Momentary pleasure followed by guilt. What's your McDonald's?

What do you want? What do you feast on and it just leaves you actually feeling more hungry? Never actually satisfying you? Is it approval? Maybe something you never got from a parent.

[9 : 52] So you try to sate that hunger by constantly outworking and outperforming other people. Tearing down others who seem to be getting more approval than you. And you're just famished.

Is it love? So you try to quench that thirst as you go from person to person. Computer image to computer image. Lustful desire to lustful desire.

And by the end, you're just parched. Is it independence? You know, you ravenously complain about those who oppress you. Your boss at work. The man.

England. Whatever it is, right? You crave an identity that's unique to you and express it. You want to express it without being encumbered by anything.

And yet your soul just ends up being malnourished. How's all that going? How's that going in your life? Your hunger and your desire? Where are you feeding it? Is it satisfying you?

[10 : 49] We all, we go and we open the metaphorical refrigerator doors of our souls a thousand times a day. Hoping to peek in and to find something in there that's actually going to satisfy us.

And we leave empty. And this theme of hunger and thirst is not isolated to this beatitude. It goes throughout the entire Bible. I want you to let your mind wander through whatever part of scripture that you know.

You'll hear these themes of hunger and thirst. God creates man in the garden. Gives them food to eat. They turn away and they go and they take different food. And the book of Genesis, it ends with a famine.

In the book of Exodus, the people are in slavery and God brings them out. And what do they immediately start complaining about? Oh man, if we had leeks and onions like we did in Egypt, that would be great. Are you kidding me?

That is the craziness of sin. That's how we complain about things. Hey, you set me free. Great, I'm not making bricks anymore for the slaveholders. But man, I miss my leeks and my onions.

[11 : 46] And they go and they continue to go and they're wandering through the wilderness. And they are constantly hungry. And they're parched looking for water to satisfy them. There's this lady named Ruth.

And what's she doing? She's looking for food. She's gleaned from the corners of the fields. Desperate for food. King David, he's constantly on the run and hungry. We sang one of his psalms, right?

As the deer pants for water, so my soul longs for you, O Lord. Like Psalm 63. My flesh faints for you as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. There's this guy, the most emo guy in the Bible, in Ecclesiastes.

The writer of Ecclesiastes. And he's constantly asking the question, Is there anything out in this world that can actually bring satisfaction? Is there anything under the sun? The prophet Isaiah, he says, why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which is to not satisfy?

And this theme doesn't just end in the Old Testament. It continues in the New Testament. Jesus' first encounter with the disciples. Empty nets. Jesus' first miracles. He shows up at a wedding and there's no wine.

[12 : 51] He's teaching the crowds and they're there and they're like, hey, we want to listen to you but there's no food and we're so hungry. He's baptized. He goes in the wilderness to fast.

Again and again, the Bible and Jesus are telling us that we are hungry people. And he's come to do something about it. I don't know about you. If you've ever been not just like kind of hungry.

Like, I mean, I'm just like constantly hungry. People ask, can you eat? I can always eat, right? But not just like that. But I mean like really. Like you haven't eaten in a long time and you haven't drank anything. A drop of water.

It is agony. It's agony. Food and water. There's these basic fundamental human needs. And so Jesus uses hunger and thirst to depict the intensity of our desire.

And this rudimentary need we have for God and his ways. And how anything we put in the place of God, it will not satisfy our hunger and thirst. Before looking at righteousness, let me apply by asking a couple questions.

[13 : 53] Do you really believe that underneath all of your hunger, hunger for comfort and esteem and love and meaning and beauty, do you believe that your fundamental hunger underneath all of those things is for God?

Do you believe that you're actually hungry for Jesus? That's what the Bible tells us. We have all sorts of strategies to feed our hunger and pretend that we're full.

We can go in an irreligious way, in the way that the world goes and just try to buy more things and to get the most beautiful, significant other and to try to get the most promotions at work, hoping that that will fill us.

There's even a religious way of going about this, where if we just get all the right answers, and we just have an exterior, you know, food that feeds, just, you know, we're not going to let it really go deep to the deep down hungers.

But I just want to be right, and I want to be better than other people, and that's going to satisfy me. These strategies don't work. They just leave us more hungry and more thirsty. So part of this beatitude saying, but blessed are you if you've come to terms with your own hunger and your own thirst.

[15 : 00] You realize your desire. But it's not just any sort of desire, right? It's a desire. It's a hunger and thirst. Not for the soup du jour of our secular culture. It's a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

So what kind of righteousness is Jesus talking about? I'm trying to keep it as simple as possible. Righteousness, Jesus is talking about righteousness. It means when things are right. When things are as they are supposed to be.

And there's usually two different views when it comes to this beatitude about the righteousness that Jesus is talking about. One commentator will talk about it in terms of a personal righteousness.

Like a personal piety. Like your life before God. And then some people will talk about it in terms of a social righteousness. Kind of a justice. Righteousness out in the world.

Fair, just living in the world. And both are biblical truths. And both flow from the character of God. And in fact, I want to say both of them can get at what this means.

[16 : 02] But I think it's best to say it is a righteousness that comes from acting in conformity to God's will. That then has this overflow into the world. That we want to be right with God and right in our relationships and see people treated rightly.

And we want that to actually happen in other people's lives. Right? So it's not just a love of God. It's also a love of neighbor. So, you know, how do I, why am I saying this?

Well, if you go, keep going through the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus actually talks a lot about righteousness. He says in Matthew 5, 21, that your righteousness is actually supposed to surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees.

The people in that day who people would say, those are the most righteous people living. And the reason he gives that is if you go to like Matthew 23 when he gives his woes to the scribes and Pharisees.

He basically says, your righteousness is skin deep. It's all on the outside. And it's actually supposed to be a righteousness that goes down to your gut to actually feed your deepest desires.

[17 : 06] So when he goes through the Sermon on the Mount, that's why he talks about things like fasting. Right? And he says, you know, some people fast and they just kind of like contort their faces. So everybody knows that they're fasting.

And he says, listen, if you do it that way, you got your reward. That's what you're looking for. You're looking for approval. You've got this hunger. Right? And you're saying, I'm going to do this and this is going to make me feel good. And he's like, that's your reward.

But it's actually not going to get deep down inside you and meet your deepest desires. Right? So, but it's not just this personal piety, this obedience to the will of God.

But also it has this social dimension to it. In the Old Testament, the words righteousness and justice are used over 50 times together. Constantly used together.

If you think Genesis 18, 19, God says to Abraham that he's chosen him, that he and his children may keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.

[18 : 06] And so if you keep going through the Sermon on the Mount, you get to the Lord's Prayer. And what does Jesus teach us to pray? We prayed it a little bit earlier. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

So the righteousness that we seek is that would be true. That his will would be done first in our hearts, but also out in this community of the kingdom. But then also that that would flow out and overflow and spill into this world.

Remember, Jesus says, remember the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25? Jesus says, he literally says, it's to the righteous. That's the word that he uses. It's to the righteous that he will say, you know, you saw the hungry and you fed them.

You saw the thirsty and you gave them drink. Kind of reminds you of the Beatitudes, eh? It's those who hunger and thirst for righteousness who want to actually feed the hungry. It's those who know what it is to thirst after God who actually want to give a cool drink to their neighbors.

You've ever seen the dog food commercials and wondered, how do they always get those dogs to run? You know, they're trying to sell whatever type of dog food it is and they put it in the bowl at the end. Every single commercial ends this way.

[19 : 16] The dog runs up and he gobbles up the food. Do you know how they get them to do that? They don't just sit there with a camera and let it roll for like hours and hours. Sometimes they don't feed the dogs.

They starve them for as long as humane and they wait. And so the dog is desperate for food and runs and gobbles it up.

You see, part of being hungry for righteousness is starving our sin. So to hunger and thirst for righteousness, it means we don't indulge every desire that springs up in us.

We seek to starve sin. And there's a way of saying, again, like to let it not just stay on the surface but go down deep. You know, say, oh, I kind of avoid those big categories.

Most people think that I'm a pretty righteous person. But what we end up doing is we kind of kick the crumbs off the table to the sin underneath the table and it doesn't kill it. It just keeps it alive.

[20 : 19] It keeps it right there. What we're supposed to do, what the Bible talks about, what Paul talks about, is we're supposed to kill our sin by the power of the Holy Spirit. Lest it eat at us from the inside and spoil our appetites for the things of God.

What does that look like for you? It might just look like trying to go and find accountability with somebody else in our church. You have no one who would love to try to connect you with someone and try to figure out what that looks like.

But to go to somebody else and say, this is what my desires are. These are what my cravings are. This is what I'm hungry for and this is what I'm going to. Would you help me? Would you listen to me?

Would you pray for me? Would you hold me accountable? After all, you are what you eat, right? So, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, it's this aching knowledge that the world isn't as it's supposed to be.

But also, I'm not the way I'm supposed to be and it's this gnawing desire for God to make things right. Starting in our hearts, flooding our inner lives and pouring out into righteous deeds in the world that are in conformity to God's will.

[21 : 26] That leads me to our second question. What's the promise then attached to this beatitude? It's not so much fun to be famished, it's torture to be hungry and to be thirsty and to not have that need met.

And so, Jesus' promise is that for those who thirst and hunger for righteousness, that they will actually be satisfied. That they will be filled. That that need will be met.

Stomachs will be sated. Thirsty mouths will be filled. A heart's pining for faithful obedience will be led in righteousness. Souls longing for God to set things right will not be left to starve.

They will not be abandoned to eternal dissatisfaction. What Jesus tells us here is, you see, God, when you come to him and you admit your hunger and your thirst, he does not meet you with scorn.

He does not shame you in that hunger and your thirst. Instead, he comes and he feeds you with his very life and his grace and his ways and his new way of being human in the world.

[22 : 38] God is not content to let you drink salt water, but he offers you living water that will never go dry. I want to remind you, remember, I went through the whole Bible and said all these places where people are just so dissatisfied because they're hungry and they're thirsty.

But God is a God who wants to feed his people. We are hungry and thirsty and God is a God who desires to feed his people. So in Genesis, not only does he give them the tree in Genesis 1, but after they sin in the fall, what does he do?

He says, come here, let me show you how to till the ground and bring food from it. In the book of Exodus, the people are in slavery and he's about to deliver them. He says, but before you go, let's have a meal.

There's going to be a drink, some dry herbs, a lamb. Later, it's going to be milk and honey. But for now, here's this meal. It's this picture of the salvation that I offer. In the book of Deuteronomy, it's setting up the sacrificial system.

And he tells them after making a sacrifice for sin, he wants them to take part of the sacrifice and eat it in his presence. Food is this tactile reminder of his provision.

[23 : 49] This is why we come and we dine at the table of Christ with his body and his blood. Because we're hungry, we're thirsty. And he says, here's the thing that you actually need.

Partake. This tangible reminder that God is a God who wants to feed and to fill us. The people are wandering through the wilderness and they're constantly hungry and thirsty. And what does God send?

He sends manna. In one of the most terrifying passages in the Bible, quail just fall from the sky and land everywhere. I can be ready for that one. The people are thirsty. And what happens?

The staff strikes the rock and water pours forth to give drink to thirsty people. This widow, Ruth, she goes and she gleans the corners of the field.

And it says about her, because of the work of the kinsman redeemer, it says she ate until she was satisfied and she had some left over. Psalm 23 says that God, God, he prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies.

[24 : 46] And Isaiah 55, the prophet who's just cried out, why do you spend your money on bread? Why do you spend money on these things? He cries out to this nation running from God.

And the invitation is to come and to dine on the richest affair that God. God actually wants to feed us. And you get to the New Testament. And Mary, her response to the news that she's going to bear the Messiah is, Blessed be God because he's filled the hungry with good things.

Think of Jesus himself. He's bored and he's put in what? A feeding trough. And he goes in his ministry and those empty nets get full with food.

And this wedding that has no wine, all of a sudden is the best wine ever. And those hungry crowds who are crying out, hey, we're listening to you, but we're hungry. Jesus takes a little bit of food and he multiplies it to feed all of these people.

And in John 6, he says that he's the bread of life. And in John 7, he says that if anyone thirsts, they should come to him and drink. He's not come to feed his people with a pep talk and a secret prayer.

[25 : 50] He's come to feed them with his very life. The night he's betrayed. He says, take, eat my body. It's given for you. Take this cup and drink.

It's my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. I'm here to feed you. I'm here to fill you. He's the righteous branch of Jeremiah 23 who does justice and righteousness.

He's the one of whom Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1 that he has become wisdom of God to us and righteousness. He is the righteous one.

He says in John 4, 34 to his disciples, my food is to do the will of him who sent me. He's the only one who's ever lived, who's fully hungered and thirsted for righteousness.

But was he satisfied? Some of the last words of Jesus on the cross are, I thirst. He's given vinegar.

[26 : 51] And he dies a thirsty death. The reason that we can eat and drink without cost is because it costs Jesus. The end of our disordered hunger is what we see on the cross, but it's going on for eternity.

There's a warning in this passage. If you hunger and thirst for anything besides righteousness, you will never, ever, ever, ever be satisfied. And it will go on for eternity. And that's the worst thing in the world.

But there's also an invitation. That God doesn't want to leave you in your hunger and your thirst. It doesn't have to be that way.

Remember, there's this upside-down nature to the Beatitudes. It's because they follow the upside-down nature of the king and his kingdom. It says, Paul writes that he who knew no sin became sin so that you and I could become what?

The righteousness of God. That on the cross, Jesus, he takes that eternal thirst for us so that we who hunger and thirst after righteousness could have it, can drink and be satisfied.

[28 : 05] He's hungers in our place so that we can eat and be filled. And this promise is now that you can actually come and feed on Christ's grace. That you can actually find satisfaction for all of those desires within you.

All those hungers that you have. If those are welling up inside of you, all these things that you hunger and you thirst for, you don't have to push them away. You get to bring them to Jesus.

And you get to be honest about those things. And you get to say, I know that you are not going to turn me away. But Lord, would you help me to hunger and thirst for your righteousness? Would you give me your righteousness?

And his promise, it is that he will feed you. He will not turn you away. That you will be full. And the promise is also not yet. Because our journey of hunger and thirst, it's going to come to an end.

It's going to come to a fullness where we don't hunger and thirst after unrighteousness anymore. You see, the very last chapter of the Bible in Revelation 22. Jesus, the Lamb, is sitting on the throne.

[29 : 07] And it says, from that throne, what's streaming through the New Jerusalem? A river. Living water. Bright as crystal.

And on either side of that river is two trees of life. And those trees are bearing fruit constantly. And from those trees and their leaves, you know what they're for?

They're for food for what? For the healing of the nations. It's the food that he gives. The righteousness that he's after. This world full of righteousness. It's for us.

And then it has. It goes out into the world. Right? And then there's this glorious announcement. It's like the dinner triangle bell. Brrring, brrring, brrring, brrring.

That gets wrung out. The Holy Spirit. The one who actually stirs up the hunger and thirst for righteousness. He declares, come. Let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

[30 : 07] Don't you see? You and I, we are hungry people. But God actually wants to feed us. And listen. Listen. I'm not the expert in righteousness.

I know what it's like to hunger and thirst after things that won't satisfy. I'm just as the famous phrase goes. I'm just a beggar who's found bread.

Who's trying to tell other beggars where I found it. You can go your whole life and you can try to fill yourself with your grades. You can try to fill it with the perfect job. The perfect spouse.

And you are going to be left desperate. And you're going to try just the right amount of friends. Just the right prayer life. Just these right techniques that if I just do these things then it will be enough.

And you're going to find again and again that you're hungry. And you're thirsty. And the only thing that's going to fill it, the Bible says, is actually this blessing. This benediction.

[31 : 03] To say, you're my son. You're my daughter. And I see you and I love you as righteous as the righteous king that you worship. And maybe you too can be that for other people.

You go and tell people about how you've been filled. In terms of evangelism, you see so many times, how do I talk to people? Well, listen, what we have in common with every single person in this world is that we're all hungry and we're all thirsty.

Tell them about what you've been hungry and thirsty for. And go, you go, tell one another, tell yourself, tell your children, tell your neighbors where you found food.

Where you found water. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They'll be satisfied. You will be satisfied.

You will be filled. And not just filled, but filled to overflowing. Thanks be to God. Let me pray for us. Father, you know our hunger and our thirst.

[32 : 11] For some of us, we don't know it. What we've hungered and thirsted for or tried to satisfy ourselves with. Others of us, we're all too aware. And we feel shame over those things.

In either case, Lord, don't leave us where we are. Move us away from the poison of sin. And give us the nurturing food of your grace and your righteousness.

Father, I pray that you give us a vision, this great, beautiful, sanctified imagination of what it looks like to live in righteousness. That we don't just see it as denying ourselves, even though we do deny ourselves.

But it's also feasting on the good life. It's feasting on you and your son. It's feasting on the righteousness of Christ. It's feasting on joy.

Abundant life. Eternal life. Joy in community. Joy in knowing you and your word and in prayer. Joy, Lord, in following Christ.

[33 : 15] And know that there's an end to all of our suffering, all of our hunger, all of our thirst. That it will be met. So, Father, would you stir up this imagination within us.

Stir up this longing, this craving. And meet us with your very life. We pray all this in Christ's name. Amen.