

Matthew 5:6

Hungering and Thirsting for God

Do you know the difference between what you want and what you need? I remember taking a trip to Haiti and the missions group that I was going with had to have a discussion about having no air-condition, not having enough hot water to take a shower, and preparing us for the smell of a country that has a very unsophisticated plumbing system. I am telling this for perspective, to help us to see the difference between what we have and what we need. The two may be the same, hopefully you have everything that you need, and hopefully you have more than you need. But I hope that you can see the difference between some of the things you have and what you need.

Our materialistic world is filled with many things that we want but few things that we need. The latest and greatest gadget or technology comes along and does its best to seduce us into thinking that we need it. Though some of these devices are useful, in most cases, if we are not careful, we can confuse wants with needs. We have seen pictures of men and women who have been released as prisoners of war how they have faces with sunken in cheeks, eyes that are dull, a walk that is staggered, they have had something that they need withheld from them. We are not talking about an iPhone or television, these prisoners have had food, water, and other basic necessities withheld from them. Few of us have ever been without a basic need for any long period of time but if we have ever been without we understand how desperately we want what we need.

We used to go to West Point Lake and play a silly game. We would go under water and see who could go down the deepest. Going down into that green lake water meant that we had to hold our breath. Some of us were more stubborn than others and we would realize that we needed to breathe before we started swimming back up. Whenever we hit that point of needing breath, there was only one thing that mattered. What mattered was not how far we had made it down, not what we chose to wear to the lake that day, not what we had to eat before we swam; one thing mattered more than anything else - we needed to breathe, and we desperately went to reach the surface and forgot about all else until our lungs could be filled with air.

Today I want to talk with you about your greatest need. This need is a need that everyone has but not all are aware of it. This need is a need that everyone has but not one that everyone wants. This need that we are going to talk about today is a greater need than anything else you could ever imagine. You need this more than food, more than water, more than the air that you breathe. Your greatest need is Jesus and his righteousness.

Join me in Matthew 5. Before we read this text together I want us to remember what it is we are looking at. We are looking into the time that God came on a rescue mission to save the world. We are looking into that time when the Word Became Flesh and dwelt amongst us all so that he could show us the glory of God and bring us into his own glory. Matthew 5 is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, the beginning of God's declaration of the New World Order he is bringing about. This sermon is like a Charter that the King of the Ages has brought that reads: The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.

READ TEXT

Matthew 5:6 is not just a declaration, Matthew 5:6 is an invitation. An invitation to the weary, to those in need to come to satisfaction. An invitation to come to the never ceasing fountain of God's satisfaction. Are you thirsting and hungering for that which satisfies? Today I want to give you 2 truths about hungering and thirsting for God.

## 1. Cultivate a Thirst For God

Remember the context. Jesus has been teaching us a song. A song that our hearts have been singing, we just didn't know the tune. Have you ever had one of those moments? You are trying to think of this song, you know the song exists you can't get it out of your head but you are not sure what you have in your head. This song that Jesus has come to teach us is a song that we all need. It goes something like this: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. We could sing something like this: *Come ye sinners poor and needy, weak and wounded sick and sore; Jesus ready stands to save you, Full of pity, love and power.*

Today we look to the 4th Beatitude and see Jesus saying to us, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.* And so we sing, *Come, ye thirsty, come and welcome, God's free bounty glorify; True belief and true repentance, Every grace that brings you nigh.* The invitation for us today is to *Arise and go to Jesus*, to find the sweet embrace of His arms. *In the arms of our dear Savior, O there are ten thousand charms.*

Do you agree with the hymn writer? Do you find that being in the arms of Jesus is better than ten thousand charms? If you do then realize this, you didn't arrive at this conclusion on your own. You were brought here by a Savior who came to pour contempt on all of our pride. If you today are desiring Jesus then that desire is not something that you produced, Desiring Jesus is a desire that God has given you. Desiring God is a gift that comes as a result of the Spirit of God bringing conviction to you. God comes to us, infiltrating our world, telling us that all is not right with our appetites, all is not right with our pursuing. Conviction comes to us and removes the makeup that we have put on to reveal that underneath what we see, and even beyond what we portray to others, is rottenness and decay.

The world is full of people who are thirsty, full of people who have great ambitions and desires, but their desires are wasted because they are spent in the wrong direction. So people go around and around in circles trying to find what they need but without listening to the voice of God who tells us that what we need is satisfaction for our souls. Don't argue with the signs, Jesus has come to direct our desires.

Never forget this foundational truth. Without Jesus coming to us and directing our desires we would be left wandering in our own sinfulness with no solution. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone. There is nothing that we can do to pull ourselves out of the dark pit that we find ourselves in. Only one who realizes their own poverty will be one who looks to God for help. In our poverty salvation comes. Jesus sees our hungering and thirsting and gives himself to us as the complete satisfaction of our souls. We who are hungering and thirsting for God are not interested in pursuing our own efforts for salvation. We have seen that even the best righteousness we could drum up was worthless.

So we can either focus on our own efforts, which means utter failure, or we can focus on his effort which means absolute success. CS Lewis said it best in *Mere Christianity* when he said this, "Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel that we are good - above all, that we are better than someone else - I think we may be sure that we are being acted on, not by God, but by the devil. The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small, dirty object. It is better to forget about yourself altogether."

I would much rather focus on Christ and the beauty of the salvation that he has brought to me. I would much rather spend my life delighting in the Lord and focusing on the increase of him. There is nothing in this world like the free gift of salvation in Christ. Nothing else can satisfy your soul like being restored to the reason for your creation - walking with God, enjoying fellowship with him.

Search your life and see who is at the center. Is your satisfaction in God? Is it your delight to do what pleases him? Are the activities that you engage in cultivating a thirst for God? Think about the term cultivate. Cultivate is a farming term. To cultivate means to prepare a field to yield a crop. You go to the field and may have to clear the field, will have to turn up the dirt, prepare the soil to receive the seed. What are you doing right now to cultivate a thirst for God?

A good way for us to cultivate a thirst for God is to set a standard before us. Do you have anyone in your life that is a Hebrews 13:7 person? *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.* The next verse is pretty cool too, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* Meaning that if God was faithful to them he will be faithful to you. Hebrews 13 comes after a long list of people worth imitating in Hebrews 11. I remember I used to want to be like Adrian Rogers, Charles Stanley, some of my heroes. I would pray that God would give me a double portion of whatever he gave them. Then one day after reading Scripture I realized that I was aiming too low. Nothing against Charles or Adrian but I should set the bar a little higher and pray to be like Paul, like Daniel, like Joseph. I should pray and plead for a closer walk with God. I should be praying, "Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee. Take my love, my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store. Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee."

History is filled with people who were overwhelmed with an appetite for God. I think about William Carey, the father of the modern missions' movement, or Jonathan Edwards, the pastor whose passionate pursuit of God led a Great Awakening in America, and so many others. The truth though is that most of us like the storefront versions of these lives, we like to read about them, to see the outcome of their faith and want the outcome without what it took to get to the outcome. We like to think through Carey's "Expect great things for God, attempt great things for God." But when it comes time for us to get out of our comfort zones and walk we freeze. We forget that cultivating a thirst for God takes hard and diligent work. But if we truly were thirsting and hungering after God then we would do whatever it takes to have all of him and for him to have all of us.

I heard a story once of Peter Cartwright, the evangelist, who had an audience one time with President Andrew Jackson. Cartwright was a fiery preacher and when people heard that President Jackson was coming they came to him and suggested that he tone down his

message. You can just imagine what that did to a fiery preacher. Peter Cartwright got into the pulpit and said, "We are grateful tonight for President Jackson being with us. I have been advised by my friends to tone my message down tonight. Before I do let's make one thing clear: If President Andrew Jackson doesn't repent, he is going to hell." Everyone gasped. And Cartwright said, "Now that that's out of the way, let's get into the message." President Andrew Jackson came up to Cartwright after the message and said, "Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, then I would be able to whoop the world."

We can't be passive in our pursuit of God, we have to cultivate it, to passionately pursue righteousness.

Once we pursue righteousness, the fuel that fosters our pursuits is Christ himself. Number 2, if we are going to hunger and thirst for God then we must:

## 2. Feast On Christ

Feast on Christ? When Jesus was at a feast of the Jews he stood up on the last day and said, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)* Only Jesus can satisfy. Not simply an idea about Jesus but Jesus himself. And he invites us to come to him, to have all of him. He has given himself so that we could be satisfied in him.

If we are going to find our satisfaction in him then we have to stop feasting on unrighteousness. Do you hate sin? Imagine going into a public restroom and licking the floor - does sin turn your stomach like that? It is one thing to tolerate sin it's another thing to cultivate it, to play with your own sins, to delight in unrighteousness. There are blatant things that some tolerate like lust and pornography. There may be some here who are toying with the idea of unfaithfulness to your spouse. We know those things are blatantly wrong. I heard someone say one time that for a man or woman to have an affair they need to remember that Jesus would forgive them, their spouse may forgive them, but their children never would. There are blatant things that we are not to engage in, but what about our pursuit of good things instead of the best thing?

What should be said about one who is content in their pursuit of God? Are we ever to be content? Have we ever done enough to know God? Those that know him best are those that know they don't know him enough and their lives tell the story of a joy-filled, endless pursuit of God. The major problem in our churches today, a major problem in this church, is that we are satisfied with what we know. We have taken one bite of a five star meal when the whole table is set for us to enjoy feasting on righteousness.

Do some soul searching this morning. What are you accomplishing for Christ and his kingdom? If Jesus were here today and he were to ask you how you are fulfilling his commands what would your progress report be? Are you pursuing God like he told you to? Are you hungering and thirsting for righteousness like a starving person, or is your pursuit haphazard? Or even worse than haphazardly pursuing God, are you feasting on things which bring no satisfaction?

Think of Blind Bartimaeus. Here is this blind beggar who hears that Jesus is coming. When he hears that Jesus is coming he begins to shout out loud, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of David, have mercy on me!" People began to fuss at him and tell him to be quiet but the Bible says that he

called out all the more. He got the attention of Jesus and Jesus called for him to come to him. I love what the Bible says next, "And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. (Mark 10:50-52 ESV)

Are you moving yourself in the position of righteousness? Remember Christ has given us all of his righteousness. The rest of our lives is our trying to get our actions to match what Christ has already accomplished in us. So there are certain things that we do that match the appetite that Christ has given us. We don't read our Bibles and come to church to be righteous, we come to church and read our Bible because we are righteous. This verse is a call to realize the greatness of salvation that Christ has given us. We are justified (declared righteous) and sanctified (made holy) until we are glorified.

Here is the truth, every man, woman, boy an girl is one day going to spend an eternity either with God or without God. It is appointed for a man once to die and afterwards comes the judgment. The Bible is clear. Christ's righteousness is the only way to blessedness in this life or the next.

How about you? Are you hungering and thirsting for righteousness? The Bible says that you are blessed because you are the one who will be satisfied.

Prayer:

Father help us to hunger and thirst for only that which you can give. Help us to live our lives as desperate and hopeful people. Desperate for more of you and hopeful that you both will satisfy and are the satisfaction of our souls. Give us grace to pursue all that you have for us. Don't let us waste our life chasing after things that will never bring satisfaction. We trust you for these things. In Jesus name, Amen.