

UNQUENCHABLE SATISFACTION – Matthew 5:6 (with Matthew 4:4 and John 4:11-14)

INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth message in a series that we are calling “Living Heaven On Earth.” As disciples of Jesus, we know that we are called to live out the values of heaven in our lives on earth. Because of Christ, we are heirs and subjects of a kingdom that is out of this world. The values of the kingdom of King Jesus seem very upside-down compared to the values of the kingdoms of this world. Yet it is our citizenship in this Kingdom that forms our identity and guides us to our destiny.

Jesus articulates the values of His Kingdom in the first section of this sermon famously known to us as the Beatitudes. Let’s read the first four beatitudes together:

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

As one author notes the Beatitudes are “a statement of the world turned upside down, where those who mourn are comforted rather than abandoned or merely pitied, where those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are satisfied, not ignored or shouted down, where the meek inherit the earth rather than being ground into dust.”¹

By the way, this word “beatitudes” comes to us from a Latin word, “beati.” This Latin word picks up the definition of the Greek word Makarios, found in Matthew, which means happy, blessed, fortunate, and even rich. Try this on for size: “rich are the poor in spirit.” Pastor Richard reminded us that those who recognize their own spiritual bankruptcy stand to gain the most because they know their need for God. “Rich are those who mourn.” Darrell reminded us that those who mourn their own sin and the impact of their sin on others will experience the comfort of God deep within their souls. And last week, he helped us see that those who walk in the ways of meekness are rich because they walk in God’s success story.

Honesty, brokenheartedness, humility, are the qualities of the upside down world of the Kingdom of God, and especially of its King, Jesus. As we allow the Holy Spirit to form and reveal these qualities in our lives, those around us will see us living heaven on earth.

HUNGRY AND THIRSTY

So today we come to the fourth beatitude: “rich are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied.”

When I say “Hunger and Thirst” or “Hungry and thirsty” what other words or images come to your mind?

Maybe you’re suddenly feeling hungry or thirsty. Don’t worry – I’ll be finished in about forty-five minutes and then you won’t think about it anymore. 😊 Typically, the hunger and thirst we feel is quite different from hunger and thirst felt in other parts of the world.

Hunger does happen in America, but in our circles, hunger and thirst are our own creations. Our brains tell us we’re hungry because we haven’t gone without food for a few hours, or we’re bored, or we’re stressed, or we simply have a taste for something. We are thirsty because we just saw that concessions commercial before the movie started, or because it’s Friday night but not really because we haven’t gone without liquid for a day.

This of course is not the case in other places where children and adults actually haven’t eaten for a day or more, or don’t have a regular source of clean water. We have many wonderful organizations such as Samaritan’s Purse, World Vision, Food for the Hungry, The Heifer Project,ⁱⁱ and others that are dedicated to fighting hunger and child poverty all around the world, and still there are hungry children, families, and the elderly nearby and especially very far away.

HUNGRY DISCIPLES

The disciples of Jesus may have known hunger. They followed the call of Christ away from their jobs and homes and in a great sense, were dependent upon Jesus for everything, including food.

For them, when Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” it meant something a little more personal than to the average person among the multitudes listening to the rabbi teach that day. They knew firsthand the reality of Jesus’ words “man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”ⁱⁱⁱ They knew that Jesus was serious when He said, “I have meat to eat that you know not of and that is to do the will of My Father in heaven.”^{iv} And they knew that the source of all this, the water that could quench the deepest thirst and the bread of life that gives true nourishment and strength, was Jesus Himself.

In his book, “The Cost of Discipleship,” Dietrich Bonhoeffer discusses this beatitude and how Jesus’ disciples then and now can relate to it. He makes, among others, the following points:

- Disciples of Jesus long for righteousness to be realized in themselves, in the church, and throughout the world.
- Disciples of Jesus have no claim of achievement or righteousness on their own.
- Disciples of Jesus long for God’s righteousness to be displayed on earth, but realize that only God can bring it. It cannot be manufactured by human means.
- Disciples of Jesus are still in the world. They are not immune to temptation. They are disappointed and dissatisfied not only by the unrighteousness in the world, but also the lack of righteousness they see in themselves.

WHAT ARE WE HUNGRY FOR?

For me, this brings on a burning question: ***what are we hungry and thirsty for?*** You see as I look at my own life, as I talk to people both inside and outside the church, as I observe our culture, I would say that we often don’t know what we are hungry for. We don’t know that the deepest longings of our heart can be met by righteousness. In fact, we aren’t sure what righteousness is.

In his book, “Eternity Is Now In Session,” Pastor John Ortberg defines righteousness as “that which makes somebody good from the inside.” Good from the inside. It is linked with purity, wholesomeness, and even holiness. Its defining core is goodness that comes from God. HE IS GOOD AND HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER. And when we get down to it, the source of righteousness is Christ Himself.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after purity, holiness, goodness – righteousness – that is found in Jesus Christ, for they shall be satisfied.”

In our humanness we are often hungry and thirsty for other things. We drive hard after that elusive thing called success, as well as other elusive things such as intimacy, significance, fitness, or just a feeling that we are worthy of being loved or thought of as “good people.” The problem is once we’ve driven for those things a while and begin to experience them, we realize that there’s ***got to be something more.***

So we fire up the drive again. This time the pace is more frantic. We know that this will probably be futile, too, so we deaden the pain of futility by increased activity sometimes in good and sometimes in risky behaviors. And in moments when we can think clearly, we are tormented by the silent screaming of our souls, “You’re missing it! You’re starving me! I am thirsty!”

ADDICTION AND LISTS VS. HUNGER AND THIRST

There are often two ways we deal with hunger: addiction and lists.

Hey everybody, I want you to experience something. If you have your electronic device out (because you were taking notes of course), turn it face down. Just be still. [PAUSE FOR THIRTY SECONDS.]

In her book “Screens and Teens” child thinking expert Dr. Kathy Koch argues that children of today don’t know how to deal with boredom because they are constantly stimulated, usually by the gadgets we hold in our hands. So she suggests that we all need to establish tech-free zones, like the dinner table (including eating out), and car rides around town that are 20 minutes or less. You may laugh, but if your child is used to watching Youtube while you’re roaming around town, or if you are used to checking your Instagram during dinner, these short intervals of time will seem very long. But it’s healthy. Children and adults need to learn to deal with times of no screen stimulation and re-engage in a verbal thing humans used to call conversation.

I know I sound like a crazy old man. Believe me, this gadget gets me into trouble. I am not perfect. It is easy to become distracted by our technology and addicted to it. And if you get into social media, the distraction and addiction can become deeper and even dangerous. The body naturally releases dopamine during positive social media interaction.^v Dopamine releases like that create a feeling of pleasure emotionally. It’s the same feeling as when something really special happens in your life, but now, through the miracle of modern technology, it can happen once every few seconds.

“Ooh, I got 50 likes in the first two minutes.”

What happens when you – like me, mostly – get only 2 likes in three days? Or no likes ever? The pursuit for that high, and the depression you can feel when you don’t get that high, gets more and more and more consuming. Technology is just one example of addiction. Watch out for it in your life. Starve it, and feed your soul with good things.

List-making can also be a dangerous substitute for masking our hunger and thirst. We fill our hunger and thirst with self-made goodness. We make long lists of things to do or to avoid, and those lists, instead of a relationship with Christ based on love, become the basis of my spirituality – and yours, too, if you don’t follow the items on my list. 😊

Yet we do see lists in Scripture. The Beatitudes themselves are a kind of list. In Galatians 5 the Apostle Paul gives a list of what Christians aren’t supposed to be into. You can read that list in verses 19-21. Another list follows it in verse 22. It’s a list of what Christians ought to be about, the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness, and self-control.”

When I focus on making the lists instead of love, and checking off the boxes on my lists instead of serving others, I get puffed up rather than poor in spirit. I get boastful about my

own vitality rather than mournful about my sin. And I can develop an arrogance that is the opposite of meekness. And when I focus on the lists, I can become satisfied by my own accomplishments instead of being dissatisfied with myself and satisfied by Christ alone.

TRAINING MY APPETITE

We all have a hunger and thirst. We turn to the world, and often to addictive behaviors, in order to try to fix the nagging problem we think we have. We create and keep lists in order to measure our righteousness so we can feel good about ourselves. But the truth is, we need to be dissatisfied with those things and pursue Christ and His holiness. That's righteousness.

Here are some suggestions for what to do when confronted with unrighteousness in your life.

Unplug. When you realize you're off balance, either from addiction or list-making: seek stillness. Give yourself a period of fasting from the addiction or burn your lists. It will seem like torture. Let them go. For God's sake, and yours, let them go.

Resist. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Wash your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded."

There are moments in our lives where the best thing to say is, "NOT TODAY, SATAN!" (Bitterness, Gossip, Anger, Language, Pride)

Run. In addition to resisting, we need to know when to run. 2 Timothy 2:22 (NLT), "Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts."

Choose. Many times, when we're honest with ourselves, choices are clear. We can choose to do the next right thing, and in doing so we will train our appetites to desire righteousness.

Get Good On, Don't just cast bad aside. Then, instead of thinking about depriving yourself, think about surrounding your mind and heart with what you KNOW will bring you closer to Christ. Follow some great Christian leaders on social media and then slowly go through your friend list and stop following influencers that are pointing you away from Christ. What's on your music playlist? Crowd it with worship music! Make attending worship and going to small group and serving on a team a regular part of your life. Why? Because if you're addicted you need to be in places where you're accountable for your use of time and you need to see and hear things that will begin to fill your mind with Christ. And if

you're a listmaker you need to develop the humility that comes from learning from and serving others.

FEASTING ON CHRIST

I grew up on a farm in Ohio where there is a thriving Amish and Mennonite community. Some of my extended family members are lovely Mennonite Christians. Mennonites are known for singing complex hymns *a cappella* in four, six or eight part harmony as effortlessly as breathing. They have a strong sense of community. Men work together on building and repair projects and women gather together to make lovely quilts... and something else... pie.

I love pie... not just any pie, fruit pie. And I've become picky about fruit pies, too...usually. My favorite pie is Pennsylvania Dutch style peach-blueberry pie. A lattice crust made from scratch, rolled out by hand and baked to flaky, buttery perfection... and then there's the fruit – juicy, sweet peaches and plump blueberries with enough sugar to make them delicious, but not so much that your mouth feels grainy, and the best part, in my opinion, is the hint of cream in the syrup that brings the fruit and the crust together in one delicious dessert.

The Psalmist says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." One way to start hungering and thirsting after righteousness is to taste it and realize how good it is. This speaks to an older generation modeling righteousness to a younger generation. If one of those sweet older Mennonite ladies hadn't made that pie and put it out at a family picnic, I wouldn't have ever tasted it. If we as mature Christians don't model righteousness to a younger generation they'll never taste it, either.

What would your world look like if you became satisfied by nothing but Christ in your life? What would your relationships look like? What would your marriage or family feel like? What would our church be like? What would the world around us be like?

As we become satisfied in Christ, we also realize what more we can become in Him. As we yield ourselves to His work in us, we long for more of Him. This unquenchable satisfaction will be realized one day, when Jesus who died shall be satisfied, and earth and heav'n be one.

"God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Brothers and sisters, let us

- be dissatisfied with where we are now and urgently desire more of God in our lives.

- lay down our addictions at the feet of Jesus and ask Him to fill us with milk, wine, water, bread, and meat that can truly satisfy our souls.
- burn our lists and realize that what matters is our relationship with Christ. He is our Righteousness.
- ask God through the power of the Holy Spirit to reset our hearts and minds so that we may develop a hunger and thirst for God and His purpose for our lives: the loving, holy likeness of Christ formed in us.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the Fountain of living water, the Bread from heaven, and our Righteousness. Cause us to hunger and thirst for more of You in our lives as we walk through the desert of this world, until we see You before the throne of God and serve You day and night in Your temple, for You have promised to those who hope in You,

“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.

The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; He will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Until the day when You satisfy our thirst in Your presence face to face, cause us to be transformed by Your presence in and among us, and let us desire You above all else. So may You receive glory in our lives and in the church. We pray with thanksgiving in Your Name... Amen.

ⁱ Mary Hinkle Shore, “It’s the Indicatives, Stupid!” Pilgrim Preaching: Readings for Preachers and Others, November 1, 2003

ⁱⁱ In order of ratings from <https://www.charitynavigator.org/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 4:4

^{iv} John 4:32

^v “Facebook and Your Brain: the inside dope on Facebook”, Eva Ritvo, MD, *Psychology Today*
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/vitality/201205/facebook-and-your-brain>