

## Happy are the Hungry

Matthew 5:6

Manuscript and Discussion Guide for May 24, 2020

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We're all familiar with the nutritional listings on food and beverage packages. When I was younger, I never read that stuff. I was only interested in buying that package because it was filled with Oreo cookies with double stuffing.

Now, If you go to the grocery store, you'll notice people like me standing there reading the box.

How much sugar does it have? How much salt?

I like to put peanut butter on my apple slices. I decided to buy a jar of organic peanut butter, you know, because I'd run out of Oreos. I took one bite and it was really disgusting. I don't know how I missed this but when I looked at the jar again, it said, no sugar added and no salt added. I thought peanuts had salt just sort of baked in.

It was terrible.

Back to my point – I'm now interested in carbohydrates and calories and sugar and sodium. I want to know how much of what is in my food relates to the recommended daily allowance.

One devotional from Our Daily Bread provoked my thinking when it asked, "What if every TV program, magazine, podcast, Facebook post, included somewhere in the margin how much it contributed to the recommended daily allowance for spiritual health and well-being?" In other words, what if we knew what it added to and what it depleted from our spiritual walk?

The problem is, everything isn't labeled. That's why we need discernment every single day.

You've heard the old adage – we are what we eat. We either helped, or we're hurt by what we consume. That's true physically, but it's even more importantly true spiritually.

We are what we consume.



How have you experienced this reality?  
When have you noticed an increase or decrease in your health based on what you ate? When have you noticed an increase or decrease in your spiritual life based on your daily activities?

How many Christians do you know who are really rigid when it comes to what they put into their bodies; and completely flexible and cavalier with what they put into their minds?

What are we feeding on? What are we mentally consuming?

We are in need of discernment today more than ever before with the flood of information and media technology at our fingertips.

Listen to these statistics recently posted in an article in *Voice Magazine* I received this month.

- YouTube users upload 48 hours of new video content every 60 seconds.
- Email users send 200 million emails every minute.
- Facebook users share 700,000 pieces of content every minute.
- Twitter posts 100,000 tweets every minute.

- 571 new websites are launched every minute

There is so much media out there to be consumed. And so much of it has absolutely no nutritional value, spiritually speaking. It just might just be deleting from your recommended daily spiritual allowance.

If you're tempted to think that I'm making a mountain out of a molehill, or that I need to lighten up, you're wrong. I think you need to wake up!

Jesus made a direct connection between your happiness, and what you consume.

Let me show you that in Matthew 5:6.

Jesus is defining what it means to be blessed or fortunate. It's a Greek word that means supreme happiness.

So far in this chapter, he's turned cultural and contemporary thinking upside down with His definitions.

In verse three Jesus said, blessed are the spiritually bankrupt. Why? Because those who recognize they're sinners with nothing to offer God stand as beggars asking for mercy and grace. They're the ones getting into the Kingdom of Heaven.

In verse 4, Jesus said, blessed are the brokenhearted. Those who take their sorrow and suffering to Christ are able to find hope and comfort.

In verse 5, Jesus said in essence, happy are the helpless, those who are marginalized and persecuted and forgotten. As children of God by faith in Christ, they are ones who will one day inherit planet earth.

## The Believer's Appetite

Now we come to Matthew 5:6

*Blessed are those who hunger  
and thirst for righteousness.  
(Matthew 5:6a)*

Jesus is defining happiness as something directly related to your appetite.

The word for hunger gives us our English word for pining. It means to pine for, to long for, to crave.

My wife asked me yesterday, "Honey what would you like for lunch?" She cooks great healthy food, which I really like. But yesterday, I had a craving for Smithfield's fried chicken. There's a Smithfield's located way too close to our house. As you might know, one meal has just enough salt to last you for the rest of your life. I just had a taste for it. I was pining for it.

To hunger and thirst for something is to have a taste for something . . . to want something. It's even stronger in the sense of craving something. And whatever you crave, you're gonna figure out how to consume it.



When's the last time you had a craving?  
What was it for? To what lengths were  
you willing to go to satisfy it?

Notice here that Jesus has actually provided the menu.

We are hunger and thirst after righteousness.

That's lead to an important question: Is Jesus referring to objective righteousness or subjective righteousness?

Is it the objective righteousness of God imputed to our account at conversion? Well, that can't be true because you already have it. You're already clothed in the righteousness of Christ; it's yours already as a gift from God through faith in Christ (Romans 3:21-22)

Jesus must be referring to subjective righteousness. In fact, every one of the seven occurrences of "righteousness" in this Sermon on the Mount, has to do with subjective righteousness.

This righteousness doesn't have to do with being right with God as much as it has to do with living right for God.

Being right with God relates to your status. Living right for God relates to your experience.

Jesus says that living right for God is absolutely connected to your happiness.



The connection between righteousness and happiness is theologically true, but has it also been your experiences? Are you more supremely happy when you are walking close with God, or when you are walking in disobedience to God?

Paul had this kind of hunger and thirst for righteousness. He said it was his passion – his ambition to be pleasing to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:9)

Don’t miss the implication of Paul’s passion. To be pleasing to God means that you can live in such a way that God is pleased with you.

This is to be our hunger and thirst. Our greatest pleasure is found in pleasing God.

The menu of righteousness is expanded in Paul’s letter to the Philippians believers:

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)*

In other words, develop a craving for these things. Develop a taste and an appetite for whatever is commendable and excellent and praiseworthy and lovely and honorable.

We have the righteousness of Christ – that’s our status.

Now let’s live out the righteousness of Christ – that’s our daily experience.

Let me give you an illustration.

In 1971, a revival came to many churches in Western Canada. It made the news in the secular press because of the number of people going to stores and other businesses and making restitution for stealing or cheating. Many even went to the Canadian border to report that they’d lied about goods brought over from the United States.

When revival came, so did a desire for righteousness. They weren’t living righteously so that they could be saved, but because they were revived in their spiritual condition. Their spiritual appetite was for living rightly because they were saved.

And what a difference their lives made for Christ.

## The Believer's Satisfaction

Notice as Jesus continues:

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Matthew 5:6)*

The word here for satisfied comes right from the farm. It's the word for fodder and it was used to refer to well-fed cattle.

But there's an interesting paradox. You're satisfied with something that fills you up; only to be hungry again for that which fills you up.

There's an important principle to remember regarding hunger and satisfaction.

By the way, the same thing happens with our physical appetites and physical satisfaction. When you're hungry, you eat and are satisfied. Then, you become hungry again for that which satisfies.

It reminds me of the Thanksgiving celebration at my house. I eat and I'm satisfied. I feel like I can't eat another bite. A couple hours later I'm making a sandwich.

This does nothing more than prove you are alive. The deceased have no appetite. The living do.

This promise of supreme happiness can only occur in the life of someone who has come to life spiritually by faith in Jesus Christ.

This is a promise for the living.



Have you ever felt discouraged or disappointed with your continual need for spiritual nourishment? How does it encourage you to know that being both hungry and satisfied is a perpetual condition for Christians?

David wrote:

*"My soul is consumed with longing after Thine ordinances at all times." (Psalm 119:20)*

Jesus' definition of happiness in Matthew 5:6 can be boiled down to two questions:

1. What am I hungry for?
2. And how hungry am I?

Aristotle wrote of a time when one of his young students came to him and said, "Aristotle, you have wisdom that I so desire to have; how can I have it?"

Aristotle said, "You really want it?"

The young man said, "Master, I do."

Aristotle then said, “Well then, follow me.”

He headed across the porch of the building they were in and out into the courtyard, and without hesitating walked directly into the pool of a fountain and water nearly waist high. The young man hesitated and then thought, “Well, he said to follow him in order to find wisdom,” so, gathering up his robe, he climbed over the edge and waded after Aristotle.

When they were in the middle of the pool, Aristotle suddenly turned, grabbed the young man by the nap of the neck, pushed him under the water and held him there. The young man was thrashing about with his arms and

kicking with his legs, thinking he was going to drown.

Then, at the last moment, Aristotle picked him up and carried him over to the side of the pool.

The young disciple was coughing and sputtering in shock and rage but Aristotle ignored it all until the man got his breath and Aristotle then asked him, “Young man, when I held your head under water, what did you want more than anything?” “Air, sir, air!” the young man cried. His teacher then said, as he climbed out of the pool, when you want wisdom as badly as you wanted air, you will have it.”

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## Your Turn



What do you want more than anything? To please God? And how badly do you hunger for that?

A starving man doesn't want food and a new car. He just wants food. A woman dying of thirst doesn't want water and a new outfit – she just wants a drink of water.

There's nothing wrong with a new car and new clothes . . . but their satisfaction doesn't depend on it.

Ask the average Christian – do you want to please God with your life? Most would say “Yes, but I also want this and that and this and that.” What would your answer be?

We're not quite famished enough, are we? Our lack of hunger and thirst for righteousness becomes our greatest obstacle to true happiness.

Praying a prayer like this is entirely legitimate:

*“Lord, give me a longing to long for You. Give me a hunger to hunger after you.  
Give me a thirst that is thirsty for pleasing You.*

Is that your prayer?

If so, you’ve come to understand the connection between being hungry and happy.

Don’t forget . . . you are what you eat . . . physically and spiritually.

I recommend you do both, every single day.

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