

Hunger and Thirst

Matthew 5:6

Introduction – Coveting is a sin, but there are things we should long for and seek after. Spiritual hunger is a good thing to have. In the first three Beatitudes, we see that the teachings of Jesus correct the world's claims that a good self-image is important. In this fourth, we see Him correct a misunderstanding that once you are saved, you do not need more righteousness.

Hunger and Thirst - One catechism separated hunger (desire for food to sustain) and thirst (desire for drink to refresh), and certainly we have many examples of the Bread of Life and the Cup of the New Covenant, the Marriage Feast of the Lamb and the Fountain of Living Waters. Consider the nature of hunger – it focuses the attention, it hurts, it is only satisfied with food, it brings desperation and great risk-taking, it 'falls to meat' and causes even bitter foods to taste better. The nature of spiritual hunger for righteousness is a sweet longing (Psalm 42:1-2, Psalm 19:10); the nature of hunger after sin is bondage.

Righteousness – There is just one righteousness to hunger for, although we can understand it in our imputed righteousness and our implanted righteousness.

Imputed Righteousness – Our justification is complete in Christ where we may claim the Lord Our Righteousness (Jer 23:6). We are complete in Christ (Col 2:10), and we are not permitted to attempt additions upon what God has done (Gal 1:9).

Implanted Righteousness – This is our progressive, ongoing sanctification that is the kind of righteousness seen (or not seen) by those around us. We long for it (Rom 8:23).

In This Passage – Righteousness is blessed (v 6), and then persecuted (v10). We are to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees (v20). The mercy, purity and peace of righteousness is illustrated (vv21-48), and we are commanded to seek it (6:33), but not without knowing the Lord (7:21-23).

Shall Be Filled – God's ultimate pursuit is His own glory, and we are created to that end. God is most glorified in us when we find ourselves most satisfied (full) in Him. Therefore, we can see that it is natural for God to be merciful, gracious, and generous with His people. We can expect to be filled. (Matt 15:32, John 6:37, Psalm 107:9, Is 44:3). The filling now is only a foretaste. One day we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2-3). This hope purifies. It makes us righteous.

Filled with Husks – There are certain characteristics of those who do not hunger and thirst in this way.

Self-righteous – They are filled with the food of their own self-righteousness. This was the sin of the Jews (Rom 10:3) and the church in Laodemia (Rev 3:17).

Food of the World – They are filled with the food that fills for a moment, but never forever. Esau sold his birthright for a pot of stew, and we are taught that in this he was profane (Heb 12:16). In their foolish pursuits, they reject the invitation to a real feast (Luke 14:18).

Filled with Righteousness –

Are You Hungry? – There is hope, for these desires are great evidence that you are a Christian. The character of a godly man is that he hungers for righteousness (Is 26:9, Ps 73:25). A hypocrite only longs for heaven, not for righteousness, not for Christ. In your hunger, take heart – your High Priest is merciful – “A bruised reed He will not break” (Matt 12:20).

Don't Ruin Your Appetite – God put eternity in our hearts (Ecc 3:11). That void cannot be filled by anyone but the Lord. But we try to fill it with lawful and unlawful activities – vacations, video games, the cinema, drugs, sex. We even try to fill it with sweet-talking religion (Ez 33:30-32).

Free Food – Jesus and all His righteousness is offered to you freely (Is 55:1-3). Don't reject the Fountain of Living Waters for broken cisterns (Jer 2:12-13). He has promised food for the hungry.