

Sermon Title: "Those Who Hunger"

Prelude

UMH #462 "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus"

Congregational Reading: UMH #766 Psalm 32

Apostle's Creed UMH #881

Scripture

Matthew 5:1-6

Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-7

Matthew 14:12-21

John 6:30-35,53-58,66-68

Sermon: "Those Who Hunger"

Lord's Prayer

UMH #454 "Open My Eyes, That I May See"

Closing Prayer and Benediction: Number 6:24-26

Postlude

Memory Verse:

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Monthly Challenge:

This month your challenge is to memorize the Beatitudes. More importantly, beyond just memorizing them you are also challenged to memorize what the individual Beatitudes actually mean.

“Those Who Hunger”

03/03/2021

Pastor Jacob Hanson

Opening Prayer

Good Evening Beloved, I hope this finds you well. Tonight we are continuing on with our Lenten study where we are focusing upon the Beatitudes. Eight (or nine, but usually counted as eight) blessings that are given by Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount. While you can find the same blessings in the Gospel of Luke chapter six, the most common way we hear these blessings is out of Matthew 5:1-12. This is the beginning of Jesus’s teaching in front of any significant crowds. The people in Galilee have heard about the miracles Jesus has been doing, they have heard about Jesus being baptized as the Messiah by John the Baptist, and Jesus has begun to amass His twelve disciples. It is at this point, shortly into His ministry, that He sits several thousand people down on the Galilean shore to teach them about many things. While at the Sermon on the Mount Jesus will preach about the sanctity of marriage, giving to the poor, proper prayer life, and a whole host of other things. The first teaching Jesus gives in this litany of messages are the Beatitudes. These blessings as we know them should really be thought more as commands from Christ. (Luke 6 also lists the Beatitudes, so if you struggle to understand the way they are presented in Matthew then look there.) They explain the characteristics of a Christian, and they lay in stark contrast from what the world expects. We have already looked at how we are called to be humble in spirit, that we are to mourn our sins, that we are to be meek, and today we are looking at how we are commanded to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

It is necessary for us to recognize on the front end that all of us hunger and thirst, all of us have these life giving needs within us. We cannot make it without eating or drinking, and our body is hardwired to let us know what we need. The same is true with regards to other things as well. We hunger for love and acceptance, we have a need for purpose, etc. It is these deeper things that separate us from animals, who (generally speaking) only need their physical needs met. We as humans ultimately also have a desire for truth, for honesty, for righteousness. All of these needs, whether physical or not for us as humans, have a proper way in which they are met... and they also have an improper way. If you think about the need for food and water, we can meet that need properly with healthy and nutritious food... or we can go to McDonald’s three times a day and slam energy drinks. If you think about your need for love and acceptance, you can find that in solid friendships and marriage and a healthy family life, or you can try satiating that need with sexual looseness and the like. There is a right way to satisfy a need, and there is also a wrong way. There is a way that brings life, and a way that gives the appearance of fullness but results in death. When it comes to our need for righteousness, this is true as well. We can seek righteousness from the source of it, or we can try and find righteousness in ourselves. Only one of those paths leads to true satisfaction, and only one leads to life.

In Isaiah 55 we are told by the Lord “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live...” The Lord here isn’t actually telling the people to come to some holy store to buy bread, but rather He is telling them where they can go to find that righteousness that we all need. Every one of us has that desire to serve God built in, and the only way true satisfaction from that desire is accomplished is by living into His calling for our lives. He expands upon this by saying in verses 6-7 that we should “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” That desire to be made righteous, to be made right with God is only found at the source of righteousness... the Lord Himself. We know that we are made right with God through Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. We know that righteousness comes as a result of our personal and intentional relationship with Him, the reception of that free gift of redemption. As a byproduct of being made right with God, we can expect to have our need to be righteous fulfilled in full so long as we cling to Him. This is where the second half of this Beatitude comes into play.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” The word satisfied there is an interesting one. In the Greek the word used is “Chortazo,” and it means something akin to being “gorged.” “Chortazo” would often be used in a livestock context where an animal is force-fed to grow. We might think of it as eating until you are stuffed. This is the kind of fullness where you are completely full afterwards, there is no room for desert, no hunger pangs that still linger, total satisfaction. In our reading from Matthew 14 on the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand (likely many more than that), it is the word that is used to explain how the people felt afterwards. They were full, they were satisfied, they were gorged, they were “Chortazo.” When it comes to our physical needs we understand what being fully satisfied looks like. We should know that the same satisfaction is available to us through Christ for our deeper needs as well. Do you still need to be satisfied with regards to your life’s purpose? Look to Christ, and you will be “Chortazo.” Are you in need of love, acceptance, and hope? Look to Christ, and you will be “Chortazo.” If you hunger and thirst for righteousness, if you long to be made right, then you must look to Christ to be satisfied. With that being said, there is a warning in this Beloved. We can be fooled, just like with our regular hunger and thirst, into trying to find satisfaction in the wrong thing. Those many thousands of people who Jesus fed with regular bread and fish, unfortunately, did not understand this and went away unsatisfied in their hearts for righteousness because they sought the wrong thing.

In Matthew 14:17-21 we read “They said to Him, ‘We have here only five loaves and two fish.’ And He said, ‘Bring them here to Me.’ Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.” This is a miracle of the highest order, the only one other than Jesus’s resurrection that is recounted in all four gospels. We read that the people were satisfied, they were “Chortazo” with regards to their physical hunger as Jesus created enough food to feed an army. This is a miracle that proves who Jesus is... God in human flesh. Only God can create, yet as we read in John 6, when Jesus starts teaching the people and trying to satisfy not only their physical hunger but the hunger in their souls, they reject Him.

John 6:26-30 we read “Jesus answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.’ Therefore they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, so we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.’ So they said to Him, ‘What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?’” Could you imagine this... they just saw Jesus turn five little loaves of bread (more akin to biscuits) and two little fish into thousands and thousands to the point where a multitude of people eat enough to be satisfied, and yet they still ask Him for a sign that He is the Messiah. They continue on to say that Moses gave them bread in the wilderness (referencing when God rained manna down on them while Israel wandered in the desert forty years). But Jesus wasn’t there to just physically feed them, but instead He spoke the words of life. He preached the good news that salvation is found in believing that the Son came for them... but they were not interested in being Choratzo in righteousness. They only wanted to be satisfied more in their bellies. In the end, as Jesus tells them over and over again that He is the bread of life, the crowd (and most of those disciples following Jesus!) walked away from Him. These people who had seen and heard the miracles and marvelous teachings of Jesus missed the boat entirely... all but the twelve. John 6:66-69 reads “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, ‘You do not want to go away also, do you?’ Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.’” This is what it is all about Beloved, belief and salvation.

.To bring this into our world, there are many reasons why people will come to church. We like the atmosphere, we maybe like the preacher, or we enjoy the fellowship, or we want to see our kids grow up religious, etc. But while those things are important, the key to everything we do is that it centers around being satisfied in righteousness. We seek to be close to God, to follow His words, to have Him at work within our hearts. We seek salvation Beloved, and we are told that if we seek for it, if we hunger and thirst for it, if we desire it and seek it out... then we will be “Chortazo,” we will be satisfied

The last piece on this then, is what does it look like to hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness? Practically, what are we supposed to do so that we will be blessed and filled? There are a few things you can and should do Beloved, but the most important thing is to seek out the source of righteousness, and to get better acquainted with Him. This means do all the traditional stuff you have heard from the pulpit before. Attend to reading and understanding your Bible. If you do not care for the Lord’s word, where He has clearly given us His measure of righteousness, then you will not ever be satisfied. We should not claim to know God well if we are not seeking to listen to His word... “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Secondly, seek to act righteous in our world according to His standards. We shouldn’t be self-righteous, but we should be putting into practice the commands to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and strength” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If we seek to do what is righteous, which is following God’s commandments and loving our neighbors, then we too will receive that righteousness. The final piece of this is that we should communicate with the righteous Lord constantly. Praying is simply talking to God, and the more you talk to Him in conjunction with listening to His word and acting according to His precepts, the closer you will be to the source of righteousness. There is no magical formula to getting closer to God, nor is there any special words or things that take the place of honestly seeking Him out. If you hunger for righteousness, if you thirst for the Lord to envelope your life, then you will do all this and find true satisfaction in your soul. If you seek the Lord’s righteousness, then blessed are you because you will be “Chortazo.” Let’s pray.

Closing Prayer