



- Read Luke 6:20-26
- Pray
- Review
 - The Sermon on the Mount is nothing less than history's greatest preacher preaching history's greatest sermon with absolute authority.
 - The Sermon on the Mount is not primarily about ethics; it is a sermon about salvation.
 - This masterpiece of divine truth stands for all time as a litmus test for true salvation and spiritual growth.
 - Thus, if you truly desire to know your spiritual condition, then here, in this classic sermon, is the standard by which you can determine it.

And the first indication of genuine salvation and spiritual growth revealed by our Lord in this great sermon is that those who are truly blessed—that is, those who are sincerely saved through faith in Jesus Christ—must be poor in spirit. The redeemed are people who understand their own personal spiritual poverty and know that their own individual righteousness has no power whatsoever to purchase their pardon from sin. Not only so, but even after they come to Christ and as they learn to live in God's kingdom, they will continue to grow in this understanding of their spiritual poverty. On the other hand, anyone who thinks he/she can earn salvation and a place in God's kingdom, is assuredly not among the blessed, but, rather, is to be counted among the cursed.

Today, we will examine the second characteristic of those Christ declares to be "blessed." Look with me at verse 21; it says, "*Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.*" Here, Jesus is telling us that, in order to enter His kingdom, we must be hungry. Not only so, but once we are in the kingdom, we will continue to hunger. Therefore, this hunger of which Jesus speaks is both a condition for entrance into God's kingdom and a characteristic of living there. Those who are blessed are hungry. This, of course, inspires the question, "What does that mean?"

Well, the first thing we notice is that this Beatitude reveals that people who can truly be called God's hungry people. But, "Wait," you might say, "I've been hungry before, and it was miserable." Moreover, we all know that, even in the Bible, physical hunger is no blessing. Proverbs 13:25 says, "*The righteous eat to their hearts' content, but the stomach of the wicked goes hungry.*" Obviously, then, Jesus is not talking about physical hunger. Rather as is the case with most great truths of Scripture, there are extremely significant spiritual realities inherent in what might seem to be mere physical descriptions.

Thus, by "hunger" here, Jesus is not talking about the absence of food but the presence of strong ambition. In essence, this Beatitude reveals the spiritual necessity of a passionate, driving pursuit within God's people. It speaks of a zealous desire. However, Jesus does not mean just any ambition of our choice. No, because just as surely as the right ambition can be to us a tremendous blessing, the wrong ambition will bring a devastating curse. Consequently, as clearly as we hear Jesus declaring that the hungry are blessed, we must just as vigilantly guard against those hungers which lead only to woe.

For example, take the example of Lucifer. Lucifer was created by God with great splendor, yet he became doggedly consumed with a perverse passion, which has resulted in his terrible curse. His unholy ambition and its outcome are described in Isaiah 14:11-14:

Your pomp is brought down to Sheol... The maggot is spread under you, and worms cover you.' How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High."

Very simply, Lucifer's driving ambition was to be like God. He was hungry for sure, but not in a manner that is in any way blessed. No, Lucifer was power hungry. His hunger was an indomitable ambition for a power he was never created to have—a power that forever belongs to God alone. And God's response to Lucifer's unholy ambition is a woeful curse indeed. Isaiah 14:15 says, "*You shall be brought down to Sheol. To the lowest depths of the Pit.*"

Blessed are the hungry, but not those hungry for power.

A second example of woeful ambition is that of Nebuchadnezzar, an earthly king of unmatched stature and worldly glory. As you may recall, he was the king of Babylon, which is commonly regarded as the greatest of all the world empires. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar might just be the most decorated king of all human history. And Nebuchadnezzar was also very ambitious. In Daniel 4:30 he reveals his deep, driving hunger, saying, *“Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?”*

Much like Lucifer, Nebuchadnezzar was also consumed by a catastrophic hunger. While Lucifer was power hungry, Nebuchadnezzar was hungry for praise. So praise hungry was he, in fact, that he had the blind audacity to claim that the great prosperity of Babylon had come about by *his* power and existed for *his* glory. And you may also recall how God reacted to Nebuchadnezzar’s hunger for praise. In Daniel 4:31-32, God responds by saying, *“This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.”*

Blessed are the hungry, but not those hungry for praise.

Third, let us consider the example of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:17-19:
[The rich fool] thought to himself, “What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.” Then he said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”

This man had ambition too, didn’t he? He was driven by a strong and compelling desire to live the easy life of abundant belongings. Not only so, but he was clearly uninterested in sharing his wealth with others. We have seen the curse of the hunger for power and that of the hunger for praise, and here in the Parable of the Rich Fool we see the curse that comes with a hunger for possessions. And in Luke 12:20 we hear God’s response to such ambition: *“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’”*

Blessed are the hungry, but not those hungry for possessions.

While there are many, many more examples of unholy hunger to be found in Scripture, we will consider just one more, and that is the example of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-13:

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living."

This prodigal son, too, had strong ambition. He longed for the frivolity, fame, and festivity of a self-indulgent life. He had an urgent ambition to revel in the indulgence of sin. He was hungry for pleasure, and in this parable we see the woe inherent to those who chase after the pleasures of this world. You will recall that his hunger for pleasure brought only poverty, starvation, and shame, and it sent him crawling back to the life he had wantonly abandoned. As the great king professes in Ecclesiastes 2:10-11, *"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure... Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind."*

Blessed are the hungry, but not those hungry for pleasure.

You know, if we will look around us, and even as we look into our own hearts, we will absolutely find all sorts of ambitions. Moreover, if we will evaluate those ambitions against the infallible touchstone of Scripture, we cannot help but acknowledge that nearly every ambition of the world amounts to foolishness in the end. The world is, in general, hungry for the wrong things. And if we will honestly evaluate our own motivations, I am certain that we will see that the same is sometimes—if not often—true of us as God's people as well. However, just because our ambitions are often foolish does not mean that ambition is a bad thing in and of itself. In fact, ambition can be an enormous blessing and the lack of it can be deadly. Take for example the physical hunger for food.

-- Dr. Zieren – Kitten disease (Rino virus) – They no longer desiring food. They die not because they cannot eat but because they stop wanting to eat.

You see, strong ambition is an absolutely necessary and most blessed aspect of our lives, but only if we want the right things. In fact, I am about to say something that may very well be the most profound thing that I have ever said to you about a

proper understanding of authentic Christian living. Are you ready for it? Here it is: God desires our desires. In other words, He wants our “want-to’s.” And we have many “want-to’s,” don’t we? We say things like, “I want to be happy; I want to be in charge; I want to take life easy.” We also express our want-to’s in negative form. We say things like “I don’t want to be uncomfortable or embarrassed or neglected.” God wants those statements. He wants those desires. He wants our “want-to’s.”

You see God is most pleased with us when we are most passionate about the right things. That is what Psalm 37:4 means when it says, “*Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.*” God has a passion for our passions, and that is what the Beatitude we are studying today is all about. It tells us what God wants us to want. It instructs us as to the glorious manner in which our ambitions should and must change once we have truly trusted in Christ and received the Holy Spirit. What is this secret to blessedness? Well, so that we do not miss it, let us take a look at Matthew’s longer version of this same Beatitude in Matthew 5:6, where Jesus says, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*” What, then, does Jesus desire for us to desire? He wants us to want righteousness.

As we think about that timeless truth, it is important to remember that the Sermon on the Mount which we read is primarily about salvation, not ethics. Indeed, it is probably the most definitive sermon Jesus ever preached about identifying who is and is not saved. Therefore, the characteristics He declares blessed are the characteristics of those who have genuinely received Christ and are growing in Him. And the woes He gives are characteristics of the lost and unredeemed. Therefore, when Jesus says, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled,*” He is telling us that a sure sign of salvation is a strong desire to be holy as God is holy. On the other hand, the woe of verse 25 makes exactly the opposite point. In other words, when Jesus says “Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry,” He is declaring that those whose lives demonstrate little ambition to please God are assuredly not among the blessed.

Therefore, blessed are those who are hungry for righteousness.

As you hear these words, please do not sell them short. Please do not think, “Oh, yeah, ok, I sometimes want to be a better person. So I guess that means that I

hunger for righteousness and that I am among the blessed.” Please understand, the waters of this Beatitude are not nearly that shallow.

You see, the word translated as “hunger” here is much more powerful than we likely realize. It points to an ambition more fierce than we probably realize, and I think a large part of the reason for this is that, thankfully, you and I don’t really have a clue what it is like to be truly hungry. We have been so very blessed by God in this country that when we say, “I’m hungry” we usually mean, “I wanted to eat at noon and it is already one o’clock and I still haven’t eaten my second meal for the day.” Most of us simply cannot comprehend what it feels like to go days without food. We cannot fathom the desire to eat present in a person who is actually starving to death.

Let me give you an example. Did you know that such a severe famine struck Rome in 436 B.C. that the lack of food prompted thousands of people to literally throw themselves into the Tiber River and drown themselves, rather than die of starvation? Do you hear that? Starvation is so awful and painful that death by drowning seems better. Real hunger is far more intense than a uncomfortable rumbling in the stomach. It is a desperate, all-consuming urge. Many, if not most, of the people to whom Jesus originally preached this sermon knew what it was like to be hungry. They understood just how extreme of a desire Jesus was communicating.

However—and hear this—as dreadfully devastating as physical hunger is and can be, it pales in comparison to the horrors of unfulfilled spiritual hunger. In other words, physical hunger is only a dim reflection of the infinitely more serious hunger that faces mankind, and that is a spiritual hunger. And in our passage today, Jesus is proclaiming that the real thing you and I need is righteousness. That is what our spirits are craving. And Jesus is declaring here that anyone who would enter into His kingdom and anyone who would continue to live there will have as great an appetite for righteousness as he/she does for food or water.

Moreover, this is not a simple one time hunger for holiness; it is a passionate lifetime pursuit. Notice, in our verse Jesus does not say, “Blessed are those who have at one time or another hungered for righteousness.” No, He says, “*Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.*” This hunger is urgent; it is an ever-present, ongoing, moment by moment way of life. With that thought in mind, let us hear these words and earnestly apply them to evaluate our own lives. Listen, if you do not habitually hunger for righteousness, there is a legitimate question as to whether or not you have even entered the kingdom of God.

Take the example of Moses. Recall the miraculous manner in which Moses had been called by God. Remember the mighty way in which God had used him. Bear in mind the Moses had witnessed God's power in a way more marvelous than anyone before Him. What is more, Moses had actually seen God in person. Yet, in spite of, his many astonishing experiences—or better yet because of them—Moses truly knew what it means to hunger after God and be filled.

Remember also that, when God took Moses up onto the mountain and showed him a flaming finger scratching the law of God into tables of stone. And when he came down, he was radiantly illuminated. Yet Moses still wanted more. And when the glory upon him began to diminish, Moses headed right back up the mountain, and looked again at God's glory. Again and again he returned to the mountaintop. We might be tempted to say to Moses, "Hold on there, pal. Don't you think enough is enough!. Haven't you seen enough already?" And Moses would say, I am certain, "Not even close." In fact, in Exodus 33:18, we hear Moses pleading with God, saying, *"I pray You, show me Your glory!"* // Moses longed to see God; he was desperate for righteousness. // This hunger is at the very core of a child of God's kingdom.

In this regard, King David was no different from Moses. Psalm 63:1 opens with these words of his: *"O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water."* And in Psalm 42:1-2, he calls out to God saying, *"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"* // For the blessed, the hunger for righteousness is a way of life.

Consider also the example of the Apostle Paul. Paul, it might appear, had seen all there was to see and he seemed to know all there was to know. In 2 Corinthians 12, we even learn that Paul had been caught to the third heaven. Yet, Paul—the very author of the deepest theology in all of Scripture—cries out in Philippians 3:10, *"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection!"* You see, children of the kingdom are those who always want to know God better. The blessed are those who hunger to become like Christ. They live with a desperation that only God and His truth can assuage.

Knowing this great ambition that Christ calls blessed, let me ask you: Are you among the blessed? Do you intensely hunger for righteousness? Here are a few questions which we will all be blessed to ask ourselves in this regard:

- 1.) Do we feel like we are alright just as we are, or do we long to be changed by the Holy Spirit for the glory of God?
 - If we think there is little about us that God wants to change, then we are simply not hungry enough.

- 2.) How much do the things of the world influence how we feel?
 - You can bring a hungry man all kinds beautiful music or flowers or a kind word, but all he really wants is food.
 - One who hungers and thirsts after righteousness will not and cannot be satisfied with anything else.
 - If our spiritual hunger is satisfied by anything but God alone, then we are not hungry enough.

- 3.) How great is our appetite for the Word of God?
 - Jeremiah 15:16 – *When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.*
 - If we hunger for righteousness, we are sure to have such an appetite for God's Word that we will devour it.
 - If we rarely feel like reading and studying your Bible, then we are simply not hungry enough for righteousness.

- 4.) How do we respond to the trials of life?
 - Proverbs 27:7 – *To the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.*
 - Those hungry for righteousness see trials as a means to spiritual growth, even though they are painful nonetheless.
 - If we can only rejoice when everything is just how we want it, then we are not hungry enough. In that case, we are chasing superficial happiness.

- 5.) Is our hunger unconditional?
 - Remember the rich young ruler. He was hungry, but his hunger was conditional, and he never was filled.
 - If we want both Christ and our sin, then we are simply not hungry enough for righteousness.