

## “Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst”

“**B**lessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6, NASB). What an unusual thing to say. Who would think that a gnawing need for anything would be considered a blessed state? Hunger and thirst are, by definition, the result of a deficiency. Those deficits, if left untended, will eventually lead to pain and, if still untended, lead to death.

They are, of course, normal human needs and must be filled if we are to live and thrive. Also, they are subject to human twisting and grave misuse. We can wrongfully ignore hunger and thirst and do significant damage to ourselves... or begin to ravenously consume food or drink in an attempt to feed desires food and drink will never satisfy. Another option is that we are so consumed by a need that we feed on and take in matters that are life-threatening. Many years ago, there was a long and harsh famine in an African country. I will never forget reading an article that described children eating dirt in an attempt to silence the horrible hunger pains they felt. Humans consume many forms of dirt to quell various kinds of hunger.

So hunger and thirst are necessary in order to lead us to life. And hunger and thirst can be managed destructively and lead to deaths of many kinds. Let’s look at the opening sentence of this piece again, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst *for righteousness*, for they shall be satisfied.” Obviously, this verse is not merely about our bodies, even though Jesus is using human, bodily sensations as a description. What does He mean? What kind of hunger is a blessed state? To be blessed means to be enviable, well-off, or fortunate.



Who would think a person is enviable when he or she needs something or is longing for something? We usually see such a state as a deficit. If you are hungry for food, prestige, success, or fame, the hunger is not considered a blessed state. It is a deficiency, and people work very hard to fill up that craving space. According to Jesus, it is a blessing when we are needy, famished, and craving *for righteousness*. Such longing is not a deficit, but instead a blessed occurrence. Such people will be satisfied rather than left empty. Righteousness means justice, goodness, and integrity, which indicates that you and I, when we are starving for *these things*, will be satisfied.

I fear much of Christendom has been hungering and thirsting after many possessions other than justice, goodness, and integrity. It has been hungry for numbers, position,

prestige, fame, and the praise of men. Such things never quell hunger... they only increase its intensity. When do you have enough followers, money, or praise? How quickly these desires lead us to unrighteousness, as we mistake the goal and seem to think it is found in external things that cause us to miss the way. To hunger for righteousness is to seek justice. How many victims’ voices, crying out to the people of God, have we heard seeking righteousness and justice? They will be satisfied. If we fail them, then God Himself will meet their hunger and say to those who turned their backs, “I never knew you.” We have fed many of the hungry dirt while declaring we are protecting the house of God. To hunger for righteousness is to seek integrity. Many in Christendom are hungry for leadership with integrity. They long for leaders who guide with

love and humility, bestowing dignity rather than bullying and silencing. Thirsting after righteousness is to long for great draughts of goodness—it is to hunger for the kindness and mercy of God to follow us all the days of our lives, while safe in the house of our God. Those who claim to be His under-shepherds are to look like Him.

As counselors, pastors, and caregivers, we must remember that we are not the Shepherd. There is only one Good and Great Shepherd. We are first and foremost His sheep. The main job requirement of any and all sheep is to follow their shepherd. That is how we graze in sweet pastures. No matter what, following is to be the driving force of our lives. Love and obedience to Jesus Christ are how we follow our Shepherd. Following has nothing to do with the trappings of our lives—status, fame, power,

or work. Following is our *primary* calling, no matter the externals. We are *under*-shepherds—a high and holy calling for sure, but also a lowly one. We tend the flock by *not* lording over them, but instead as examples of those who faithfully follow the Good Shepherd. We are low ranking... we are *never* a big deal... we work ever and always under His authority... we do not take His place... and we do not have His power. His instruction is: Feed *My* sheep; tend *My* lambs. Our purpose is to be obedient to Him personally and to His shepherding instructions. We are to feed where He directs us—in the fields of righteousness, justice, and integrity. We are to be obedient to Him when we hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Our hunger literally shapes us regarding what we physically eat. It influences the body and affects its

systems. Longing for those things that are good creates life and health. A hunger for the goodness, integrity, and justice of our God shapes us as well. Our appetites are to be like the appetite of the Good Shepherd, who said, "... I have come down out of the heaven, not that I may do my will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 6:38, YLT). May we be among the blessed when leading others into safe pastures. ✠



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