

Matthew050112-081411  
Bridge of Hope  
August 14, 2011

“The Messianic Exchange”

**Matthew 5:1-12** (NKJV) *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.*

***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.***

*Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Today we are going to be talking about appetites. Actually, we are going to talk about spiritual appetites and the spiritual health they bring to a person's life.

They say that you are what you eat and to an extent this is really true. Doctors can tell a lot about a person simply by looking at what they eat and how much they eat it. The Discovery channel just had Shark Week and so I thought in preparing for today that we should take a look at this short take on you are what you eat as seen by the Snickers company. (Play Shark Snickers Commercial) Ok . . . so maybe it isn't exactly like this but the truth is that a person's physical development has much to do with their physical appetite. Good eating and good health seem to go together.

This same truth is found in our spiritual life. J. Dwight Pentecost writes, "Spiritual growth, spiritual development, and spiritual health are inseparably united to spiritual appetite."<sup>1</sup> So strongly does Pentecost believe this that he writes later in the same chapter, "Loss of spiritual appetite is a symptom of the most serious situation a child of God can face."<sup>2</sup> That is a pretty strong statement to make.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, [The Sermon on the Mount](#), pg 40-41

<sup>2</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, [The Sermon on the Mount](#), pg 44

Jesus said, “**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.**” Applying some of what we have learned to this statement in Matthew 5:6 is saying that people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness are people who have the approval of God in their lives. Let’s go ahead and get to work so that we better understand what Jesus is offering His new disciples in this fourth Beatitude of the Messianic Exchange.

- **BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS**

1. **In this Beatitude Jesus boldly declares that essential to spiritual health is spiritual appetite.**

- If you are hungry for spiritual things then spiritual things is what you will feed upon; it would follow that you would be spiritually healthy.
- This is about learning to eat the right stuff and having a thirst for the right drink.
- My life experience has taught me a little bit about appetite.
  - There was a time in my life when I craved all the wrong foods . . . you know the stuff that loads us up with weight and eventually kills you.
  - Then one day I found out that my health was on the line and that if I were going to be healthy and live longer I had to change what I ate and learn to exercise.
  - Because I hungered for good health, I changed the way I ate and lived. I had to thirst for the right things; it had to become my desire before it became my reality.
  - And I have learned something else, I have to keep hungering and thirsting for the right stuff, if I want to maintain a healthy physical life.
- In the midst of my degenerate eating & exercise lifestyle, I didn’t crave or desire the right stuff to be healthy.
- It wasn’t until my body had become accustomed to eating right and getting good exercise that it craved the stuff that is really satisfying. It doesn’t take too much junk food or days away from the gym and my body starts to cry out for the right stuff.
- This beatitude is about having the spiritual appetite needed to have spiritual health.

2. **The big question is “What’s it take to have a spiritual appetite to be spiritually healthy?”**

- Does it take a crisis to get you to do the things that produce spiritual health?
- Can this spiritual appetite be as simple as a decision to change your life?
- How do you maintain the change so that your spiritual appetite isn’t lost?
- The hardest part for us to understand about this beatitude is that most of us live our lives with never really knowing what it means to hunger or thirst for anything.
  - Our consumerist society feeds whatever appetite we have.
  - We don’t know what it means to hunger or thirst because just about anything we could want we can have and have almost immediately.
  - And we surely do not know what it means to hunger and thirst intensely for things because we live in such credit oriented culture that we can gratify our desire by simply borrowing to get it.
  - The appetite is met before any life change can take root.
  - The religion of consumerism is in direct competition with this beatitude and the character that it presents for our lives.

3. **Jesus was very specific about what we should hunger and thirst for spiritually in our life; we are to hunger and thirst for righteousness.**

4. **The word righteousness as it is used by Jesus in Matthew 5:6 means . . .**

- “a subjective righteousness, an inner righteousness that works itself out in one’s living in conformity to God’s will – righteous living.”<sup>3</sup>
  - This is about compliance to God’s will that is fueled by a deep desire to be like Jesus.
    - You long deeply for His righteousness to be in your living as you change the way you live so it can be realized.
    - You don’t want it to be interrupted by anything.
  - What this word righteousness is about is living rightly, it is about us living the way that Christ says to live rather than the way I say to live.
  - This righteousness in Matthew 5:6 is about something that happens inside of you that makes you think differently which in turn causes you to act differently.
    - What has taken place inside of you is worked out in the actions you live.
    - Christ is seen in you because His righteousness is undeniably His and when it is seen in you it speaks of the changes that have been made inside you.
    - So being transformed by His love and grace, you choose to live differently than you lived before.
    - Your desire is to live as much like Jesus as you can.
  - Now here is where it gets really interesting, the language of Matthew 5:6 is a continual sense.
    - Meaning that you continually hunger and thirst for righteousness.
    - It is not a one-time event that takes place in your life, it happens continually in you as the gospel works in your life.
    - It is an every day, every moment, every way, kind of living and knowing righteousness.
  - When you are living a missional life you will find a continual hungering and thirsting for righteousness.
    - Sharing the Gospel with the sought of God causes you to have a spiritual appetite and your spiritual health is maintained along with it.
    - Living the Gospel in a community of believers causes your spiritual appetite to increase and your spiritual health improves along with it.
5. There is also a promise that is available to those who have an spiritual appetite, Jesus promised . . .

● **FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED**

1. Again, Jesus gives us another of His grabbing paradoxes.
  - How can you be satisfied if you are continually hungry? Think about it, they don’t go together very well.
  - How can you be satisfied, but not really satisfied?
  - How can you be both empty and full at the same time?
  - Jesus gives us a paradox that at first glance you might say that it can’t be.
2. The best way I know to explain this is fresh chocolate chip cookies. (For anyone who is really interested, that is chocolate chip cookies without nuts. Just saying . . .)
  - Now think about it with me . . . when you eat a fresh out of the oven chocolate chip cookie you are so satisfied. Totally and completely satisfied.
  - And the experience of satisfaction makes you hunger again for another cookie so that you can continue to be satisfied.

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<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes, The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, pg40

- It isn't that you became dissatisfied; you simply wanted to continue being satisfied.
  - And a little while later you recall the delightful taste of that cookie and the satisfaction it brought to you and you find yourself hungry for another which in turn satisfies the hunger all the more.
3. The paradox presented by Jesus in Matthew 5:6 describes a spiritual cycle.
- The more we experience righteousness working in us the more satisfied we become.
  - The more we conform to God's will working in us the more fulfilled we feel.
  - Our contentment or satisfaction spawns discontent or desire for more as we find ourselves hungering for more of Christ.
  - Our thirst for the truth of God's word increases as His word brings satisfaction.
  - Paul expressed this in **Philippians 3:10-11** (NIV) *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*
    - "Paul didn't find the satisfaction that he was looking for as a result of his ministry or the work that he did. For Paul, satisfaction came from knowing Jesus . . . it was communion with a Person. It was the longing of his heart that he might go deeper into the things of God."<sup>4</sup>
4. The promise made in Matthew 5:6 is one of satisfaction to be filled in this life.
- So many pursuits in life leave us empty.
  - We run to them to be filled up only to find that what we thought would bring lasting satisfaction didn't produce what we had hoped for.
  - And because of the emptiness found in the cup we have gone to drink from, we find ourselves thirsty; unsatisfied, unfulfilled, and still wanting.
  - Jesus makes His bold promise that there is a way to be filled. He says . . .
    - **Luke 6:21** (NIV) *Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.*
    - **John 4:13-14** (NIV) *"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*
    - **John 6:35** (NIV) *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*
  - Speaking about the Messiah, the Psalmist wrote, *"Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."* (**Psalms 107:8-9** NIV)
5. There is a promise, a reward of sorts; for those who are willing to put in the hard work . . . you shall be filled.

Conclusion: R. Kent Hughes writes, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst [like the starving do for food and the thirsty do for water] for righteousness [righteous living], for they will be filled [satisfied completely]."<sup>5</sup>

The problem for many in our world is that they hunger and thirst for spiritual junk food leaving them spiritually unhealthy. They look to pleasure in possessions, sex, titles, relationships, positions, and bank accounts. Filling themselves with as much as they can, only to find themselves still empty. The prevalent religion of consumerism in the western world is full of empty promises. It leads to hopelessness. It produces unhealthy spiritual lives that are empty of the very thing they are searching for.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, The Sermon on the Mount, pg 42

<sup>5</sup> R. Kent Hughes, The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, pg43-44

And to make matters worse, there are many in the church today who are seeking satisfaction in the same things. The result for such pursuit is no different. Though they are believers in Christ, their pursuit has left them empty, hopeless, and depressed.

We must remember that Jesus has given us the way, the truth, and the life. In His first teaching of His disciples, he offers an exchange as He points the way to be filled. Keep in mind that we said there is a progression of thought in the Beatitudes. The answer we search for is found in Christ and the spiritual appetite He prescribes for us.

- “We must begin with the first Beatitude, true poverty of spirit, realizing that there is nothing within us that commends us to God. We must affirm our spiritual bankruptcy.
- Next, we must graduate to the second Beatitude, truly mourning our sins as well as the sin around us.
- Then we must ascend to the third Beatitude, by allowing our spiritual bankruptcy and mourning to instill in us a truly meek and gentle spirit.”
- Finally, as we live the logic of the Beatitudes, we will be able to desperately hunger and thirst for righteousness.

There are few things more important than our spiritual appetite. We are what we eat.”<sup>6</sup>

Bridge of Hope, we need to hear what Jesus said to the woman at the well, *"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."* (**John 4:10NIV**)

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<sup>6</sup> R. Kent Hughes, The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, pg44