

Blessed Are The Hungry

The Beatitudes and many of the passages of blessing show a divine connection between character and prosperity. Many years ago, I would state that Jesus' first message was not about healing or prosperity but about character; however, healing and prosperity *are* in the Beatitudes. The blessing encompasses them all. And the beatitudes, and the Bible at large, is full of cause and effect. Examples include seek then find, sow then reap, or how about draw near to God then He will draw near to you. However, many people want the effect but don't want the cause. The issue is that many people don't want to make the effort. However, it remains that *if* you seek, *then* there is a reward.

Matthew 6:33 says to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. Things are not the goal of our pursuit; they are the result of our pursuit. Most people get into trouble when they see the Bible say "it is the blessing of the Lord that makes one rich and He adds no sorrow to it" but do not recognize the fact that the blessing comes as a result of seeking God. If we seek to do things our way and seek things, then there will be sorrow added with it. Remember, we are part of this world, but we do not have to function the way the world's system functions.

In God's kingdom, there is cause and effect. Even in the Old Testament, it is written that the blessing will overtake me. The blessing is something Jesus purchased for us, and all I have to do is run after Jesus. But of course, I have to realize that He wants me blessed. Many people do not know God wants them blessed, so they reject it and forfeit that which Jesus purchased for us. The Bible gives us a promise of blessing, and it is a cause and effect thing.

Matthew 5:6 says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." Why are those who hunger and thirst blessed? Because the result of hungering and thirsting for righteousness is that we will be filled. The word "filled" means to have abundance, to be gorged. It means to be supplied in abundance. We are not dealing with moderation here. It is basically saying that ***our harvest, our being filled, is directly proportionate to our hunger and thirst.***

Now, the word hunger here doesn't mean to just have a little snack. It means to be famished. And the word thirsty goes beyond a sip; it literally means to be parched. I was meditating on this and the Lord said, "This is part of the problem with my body, my people, today. What my people need to be asked is – 'Are you eating out of hunger or eating out of habit?'" So, the question is – "Why do you go to church?" Is it because you've always gone and it's just what you do? You just get up on Sunday morning and go to church? Is it just a good habit? This is the reason one person can sit in one chair in church and a second person sit in another chair and the first gets filled and gorged while the second looks around and watches his/her watch. The second person came out of habit.

Jesus is not saying in Matthew 5:6 that if you go to church out of hunger you will be filled. I am not saying that you won't get anything, but I will say that ***it is your hunger and thirst that determines your satisfaction.*** There are those that leave the church service and they can't stop talking about the message, the praise & worship, etc. When you come hungry and thirsty, I will guarantee you that you will get more than even what God had on the menu. I am amazed by the number of times I will say something not in my notes then someone will approach me after the service and tell me that it was just what they needed to answer their questions. You see, God will respond to your hunger and thirst. That is determined by the expectation of those coming to receive. It's biblical! If you hunger and thirst for righteousness (for God's way of doing things), you can count on being filled.

I know we live in a society that is dictated by schedules, even as a ministry we have a schedule for all the services. Sometimes those schedules dictate some things. For example, sometimes my part as the preacher has to be over in time for me to be able to preach at the afternoon prison service. But I also know that if God's not done, I can just say to the team "go" and they will handle the service. We cannot allow our schedules to dictate our hunger and thirst.

Matthew 14:13 is the account of the feeding of the 5,000 and in verse 15 the disciples come to Jesus regarding the people being physically hungry. These people's hunger and thirst for the things of God caused them to ignore the clock. The disciples urged Jesus to send them home, but Jesus told the disciples to give them something to eat. Well, you know the rest, the people got satisfied. They got fed. They were filled.

We need to fully understand that God's grace is sufficient. If my ministry schedule is busy and I don't have time to catch a nap, so be it. God's grace is sufficient. God will satisfy.

Look at Matthew 15:32. Jesus tells his disciples, "I have compassion on the multitude because they have been with Me three days." These people not only ignored the clock; they ignored the calendar! Now, I understand that our times are different, but these people hungered and thirsted to the point that not only hours but days ran together.

I can remember being in the midst of services where the time would fly by to the point that we would turn and say, "It can't be that late!" It is really refreshing when someone says, "Pastor, it seems like you just started!" when the sermon was a good hour and a half. That is evidence of hungering and thirsting.

Now, pastors should not and do not go long just to go long. Services should not be designed to go long because the longer the better. No, when God is done, we should be done. The point is that when you are hungry and thirsty for the things of God, and extra ten minutes of sleep or getting to the restaurant to beat the crowd are just things that take different priority. The Bible says that if we hunger and thirst we will be filled. ***When we come to church, when we read the word, when we pray, when we do these things***

because we are hungry and want more of God then we will reap a bigger harvest than when we simply do it out of habit.

Many people forfeit being filled because they have approached time with God as snack time rather than meal time. I am always amazed by what people will do for things other than God. For example, Black Friday – the day after Thanksgiving – is a huge shopping day. People are so *hungry* for deals they will endure hardship. They will get up early and lose sleep. They will wait in long lines. They will push people out of the way! Some of these same people will say church is too early, too late, too far, and the list goes on. “I can’t get up at 5am to pray, but I can get to the store by 5am for deals.”

The Bible is very specific – *if we hunger and thirst for righteousness – if we approach our reading times, prayer time, church services with hunger, we will be filled.* David approached God like this. In Psalm 42:1, David writes, “As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after you.” Again, in Psalm 63, David writes, “My soul thirsts for you; my flesh longs for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” These verses are about hunger.

I remember being in the midst of revival years ago. We did not care what time the services started or what time they got over. We got there early to get seats and stayed until God was done. I wasn’t going to sit in the back. We got as close to the front as we could get. We wanted the anointing. That meant we got the kids ready and us ready and left early enough to drive the 12-14 miles to still get there early. *And* we would turn around and come back that night. We didn’t care. I believe that ***revival breaks out because someone somewhere is hungry and thirsty.***

However, a true test of our faith and commitment is really born out and exhibited when revival isn’t going on and yet we’re still hungry, still thirsty, still going to church, still praying, still reading, and still chasing after God. Listen, I did not stop eating prime rib just because I had it once and it was really good. “My flesh yearns for you in a dry and weary land where there’s no water.”

Understand that the reason many things don’t or aren’t happening in churches is because there is really no desire. We are living 2 Timothy 3 and 4. Amos 8:11 says that there will be a famine for the word. People just won’t hunger for it.

Psalm 63 goes on to say, “Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You as long as I live. I will lift up my hands in your name. My soul shall be satisfied.” I love to worship God and sing praise to God. That was birthed in me during revival, but it didn’t stop when revival stopped. I’m still worshipping today like I did then.

The people in Matthew 15 are radical. They are sold out. Three days! The point is that when you are hungry and thirsty – not eating out of habit or obligation – you get more and put yourself in a position to get more. If you are approaching God with the right attitude, He will always make sure you get filled.

We have to be careful not to design services to just entertain rather than to satisfy hungry people. Many design church for people who aren't hungry rather than for those who are. God spoke to me once in the middle of praise and worship at a church and said, "I have called my people to celebrate but not to party. This is a party." Many have designed church to accommodate people and even encourage people not to be hungry or thirsty. Entertain them, send them home, then bring them back next week. They have adopted a "they will just have a good time and then they will come back" mentality. The bottom line is that these types of services will not breed satisfaction. They do not cause people to be filled. The Bible declares it – the hungry and thirsty will be filled.

I will close with this. What would you do to be filled, satisfied, gorged with the things of God? How strong is your desire? Exactly how hungry and thirsty you are determines what lengths you will go to and what effort you will put forth to be satisfied, filled, changed. Blessed are those who are famished and parched for the things of God, for they shall be gorged. Cultivate a hunger and desire for God and His way of living and doing, and you will be satisfied. The blessing will overtake you.