

Hunger and thirst. A sermon preached at St. Giles' Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC on March 11, 2018 by Rev. Herb Hilder.

Lessons: PSALM 42

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-16

MATTHEW 5:6

This morning, Jesus is not speaking about a hunger that comes with having to wait an extra ten minutes for the cheese rolls to come out of the oven. Nor is he speaking about the sensation in your stomach that makes us want to stop at McDonald's for fries and a Coke or DQ for a double chocolate sundae – even though we just ate two hours ago. Nor is Jesus speaking about thirst quenching qualities of particular brands of soda.

No, Jesus uses the metaphors of eating and *drinking as the motivating power to live a righteous life*

They are powerful and easily identifiable metaphors.

We all understand the concept of hunger

You might be hungry right now

No breakkies may be causing you to count minutes before the snacks at coffee time.

Thirst operates the same way.

When we are thirsty we can hardly think of anything else – yes?

Your mind becomes consumed with needing water to drink.

Over a thousand years ago, St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo a small town in North Africa came to a realization – an aha moment if you will

Augustine was no recluse,

He was quite familiar with the ways and wiles of the world.

So all of his writings come from a “been there, done that” perspective.

As a maturing Christian, Augustine wrote in his book, called simply Confessions

“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.”

This is a reality that has continued to touch many for over a thousand years.

I think it is a reality that sooner or later, everyone of God’s people comes to accept and seek to live life by. WHY?

First, because they have found it to be the only way to live.

Second, they have learned, sometimes very painfully that all the other things in which we

invest our lives, spend our time upon do not ultimately satisfy to the degree that God does.

FACE IT--Looking for satisfaction is the pursuit and goal of the culture in which we live.

All the magazine headlines and television advertisements suggest that what they offer you will truly satisfy

Fame, power, worldly success, stuff in any form, education – these will never ultimately satisfy

Only a nearness and dependence upon God in and for all things will do this.

We are hardwired for this as human beings

We may read vs 6 and think Jesus is pushing us to unreasonable extremes that require people become a member of a religious order

A contemplative mystic

Or that Jesus is interested in turning people into dreamy eyed seraph like creatures who quote scriptures instead of doing daily tasks like working rearing children, looking after aging parents, housecleaning or meal preparation!.\

No,

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness essentially means seriously taking God into the whole of your life and realizing how perfectly His promises and truths fit into life in the real world

This is not only about increasing one's knowledge of Bible and doctrinal facts.

Nothing wrong with that but Jesus here is asking us to go beyond just an accumulation of factual knowledge!

What HE IS asking is aligning us with God's character

God's holiness, his truth, his goodness, cultivating such disciplines and waiting on God.

Submitting our will to his...

For if your hunger is being fed by spiritual junk food of a self-centred life – you will never be satisfied!

Further, hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness is desiring to be free of sin's power in our lives.

Who do you know who does not want to live the abundant life Jesus promises?

And abundance here does not mean – more stuff, perpetual good health or no more tears.

Abundant life means things like St. Paul describes in the lesson Faith read from Philippians

--knowing Christ

--knowing the power of his resurrection.

Learning as Paul says later in the same letter.

...for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. 12 I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. [Phil 3:11b-13]

Yet you know something----*this hungering and thirsting for righteousness, you have to want it.*

No one can force you to eat

The old adage is true – you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink

Not that some branches of the historic church has not tried to force feed God's people to 'turn or burn',

Over the years I have heard stories where attempts were made to shout or harangue or threaten people into the kingdom of God.

Sad – for my reading of scripture does convey the sense that Jesus ever threatened people into the Kingdom

Rather, he laid the situation, their situation before them and asked them to choose.

While I believe all in time will be judged by God, I can think of no better way to encourage a hunger and thirst for righteousness

Than to make Jesus so attractive and winsome that people want to follow him

Lifting Jesus up, so that all may be drawn to him

We do this primarily by our actions and words – do they reflect the Jesus of the New Testament

Forcing hunger and thirst for God will not work

But living a life that shows a heartfelt hunger and thirst for God's righteousness will change lives – yours and those with whom you come into contact.

In making the statement he does in verse 6, I believe Jesus is asking of each of us his listeners – then and now – for what do you hunger and thirst for in your own life?

What satisfies you?

Look at how you spend your time and your money – the answers reveal quite bluntly what is important to you in this life

So, there is no point in trying to bring others to Jesus unless you yourself are endeavoring to hunger and thirst for God's righteousness.

Another truth about hungering and thirsting for righteousness is that *such hunger and thirst is ongoing.*

Why? The world around you, you yourself are always changing.

The matters that were front and centre in our lives say at 8-15, or 20-25 are not the same as those when we are 35-40 or 50 to 60 or beyond

So the Jesus we came to know,

The God we were told to trust in is no longer big enough for those needs that seem to grow and become more complicated as we age.

We need to *hunger and thirst for a big boy or big girl God, an adult God*

And we will not find God lacking – however old we become,

However complex our problem or need.

What is also true is that the earliest our hunger and thirst for righteousness is kindled, The more we are comfortable with sharing with God our deepest wants, fears and hopes.

I have long been moved by the Southern Harmony shape note hymn that conveys so well this ongoing thirst and hunger for God's righteousness.

**Come ye sinners, poor and needy
Weak and wounded, sick and sore
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love and pow'r**

Then the chorus

**I will arise and go to Jesus,
He will embrace me in His arms;
In the arms of my dear Savior,
Oh there are ten thousand charms.**

Still yet another truth about hungering and thirsting

Righteousness is that *God's pantry never runs low,
God's wells never run dry.*

No matter how long, how many times or how
intense their hunger and thirst for hunger and thirst
for God,

No one is ever turned away from God.

No one is ever told – you're too late, we're closed,
you missed the cut off time,

God's righteousness is not some time sensitive, best
before gift.

Our hunger and thirst for God's righteousness will
always be met by enough – in fact, by more than
enough,

For God is a lavishly giving God.

Hungering and thirsting for God is not password
protected or encrypted.

There are no special pre-conditions or means test.

Those who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness are never questioned by God as to whether they worthy.

Jesus here in Matthew 5 picks up on a statement made by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 55 of his book

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.

Songwriter Robin Mark picks up this theme in his *All who are Thirsty*

Check this praise song on Youtube -it's 4 star Robin Mark

**All who are thirsty
All who are weak
Come to the fountain
Dip your heart in the stream of life**

**Let the pain and the sorrow
Be washed away
In the waves of His mercy
As deep cries out to deep.**

May we grab that invitation, accept that call and rise to that challenge every day, sooner rather than later.