

## Blessings Part 2 Blessed Are They That Hunger

As we have said in earlier messages, when Jesus preached and as He taught the people, He would often use specially chosen wording that was appropriate to describe matters both in a very literal sense, but also at the same time expressing deeper Spiritual meanings.

And He especially like to use parables and word pictures to give fuller meaning to His words. But strangely, there were times when His parables left His listeners uncertain of His meaning.

And that was so as He gave the "Parable of the Soils". Even His chosen disciples didn't understand His meaning, prompting them to ask Jesus why He so often spoke in parables and figurative language. And in response, Jesus gave an answer that has confused many evangelicals. Jesus told His disciples,

"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. <sup>12</sup>For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>13</sup>This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. (Matthew 13:11-13)

I confess that I don't know why Jesus wants some people to understand His words, but others to not understand. But I do know that for those of us who have given our hearts to Him in salvation, He does want us to not only hear His truths, but also to understand the deeper spiritual meanings that He gives within His words.

Here in these words of Luke chapter 6, that I will read for us in a moment, Jesus is using words that go beyond their simpler contexts and meanings and here He invites us to also hear the deeper spiritual meanings of His words. Turn there with me and we will again examine these very familiar words, often referred to as "Be-attitudes". Listen, beginning in verse 20 of Luke chapter 6.

<sup>20</sup>Then He (the Lord Jesus) lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said:

"Blessed are you poor,

For yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup>Blessed are you who hunger now,

For you shall be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now,

For you shall laugh.

<sup>22</sup>Blessed are you when men hate you,  
And when they exclude you,  
And revile you, and cast out your name as evil,  
For the Son of Man's sake.

<sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!  
For indeed your reward *is* great in heaven,  
For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup>“But woe to you who are rich,  
For you have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup>Woe to you who are full,  
For you shall hunger.  
Woe to you who laugh now,  
For you shall mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup>Woe to you when all men speak well of you,  
For so did their fathers to the false prophets. (Luke 6:20-26)

Here in this special sermon, Jesus chose some of the most common matters of daily life in order to teach His disciples, and us, about how we are to respond to them, our money, or the lack of it, our food, or the lack of it, and about our emotions as we try to cope with all the many matters of daily life.

All of these things, these needs, these desires, these demands, whether physical or emotional, are a part of what these scriptures call, “the flesh”. And here in His message, Jesus is telling us that we must not treat any of these matters lightly, that each of them has the ability to reach into and have far-reaching effects upon our souls, both positively and negatively.

And here also, Jesus is elevating all of these matters of the “flesh” up into the “Spiritual” realm and telling us that it is there, within the spiritual realm that we are to deal with all those things.

Why is that necessary? It is because, too often, we want to separate out the matters of our day as being either secular or spiritual. But it should not be so, and these words are testifying to that truth. Nothing in this life is ever truly secular. All matters are inescapably “Spiritual”.

And here in each of these verses, Jesus is carefully relating the two, the flesh with the spirit, the fleshly physical and emotional things that affect us each day, and the spiritual response that you and I should have to them.

In the first of these verses that we studied in last week's message, Jesus told us that the manner in which our heart, our mind and our emotions respond to money and the things money can buy is very spiritual, and His instruction to us was that He wants to own our whole heart in those matters.

Now here in these next words, Jesus is telling us much the same thing as He deals with the intimate demands of eating and hunger. He wants us to know that He alone must own our heart in these matters.

A question as we look at this matter of food, "does food seem to be a very important thing to you? Do you consider food to be really important in your life or is food simply an instrument to alleviate physical hunger?"

May I say to us that the matter of food is a very, very "big" matter, both to those who suffer from having very little of it, and also in a very different way, big to those of us who generally live a life of plenty.

Let me first address the many of us who generally have plenty of food to eat each day, what about us? How is food such a big matter for us?

To answer that, we need only to let our minds wander to the many, many television programs, dealing with nothing else but food, the cooking of it, the serving of it and the enjoyment of it.

I must confess that as I say those words about food, "the cooking of it, the serving of it and the enjoyment of it", I am again reminded of the word that we spoke about in last week's message, the word "lust".

The word "lust" may not seem an appropriate word when used in the context of "food", but it is. In 1 John 2, the Lord, in speaking about sin, tells us that sin generally comes to us in three forms, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life".

And in the context of food, think for a moment about all of the many occasions in which you have observed, even participated in, events of fine dining, lavish parties and banquets. And then consider these words in 1 John 2. Listen!

<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

Unfortunately, within the culture of our day, the preparing of food, the serving of it and the enjoyment of it has become so much more a matter of “art” than a matter of need.

Over the recent weeks, as I sat in the rehab clinic watching my sweet wife do her rehab exercises, the television was always on and tuned to one of those popular cooking shows, with cooking contestants rushing around finding ingredients, competing in the preparation of special dishes, with cooking judges observing and judging their final concoctions. And that show is only one of many filling the airways. Martha Stewart, Rachel Ray, Emerill, and on and on, whole television networks taken up with nothing but food, the preparation of it, the serving of it and the enjoyment of it. We are consumed with learning about and knowing how to cook and eat food.

And not only do we watch food on television, restaurants have increased in unbelievable numbers, each specialized with its own particular cuisine to tantalize our pallets.

And as I have said to you on other occasions, our own son has been a part of that world most all of his working life, both by being a “Chef”, and also teaching others how to prepare food in a cooking school.

In one of the more “upper-crust” restaurants where he was the Chef, he would prepare five-course meals for special groups at which, as the Chef, he would explain to the group why they should have certain specific kinds of wine to accompany the foods being eaten. Again, the preparing and even the consuming of food being more a form of “art” rather than of “necessity”.

And also, on a more basic level, in today’s economy, with both husband and wife working, there is seldom enough time to prepare a home-cooked meal. So then, very often, it’s most every meal, breakfast, lunch and dinner “out” for the family.

So then, yes, these words here from Jesus are very appropriate and very necessary for us in our generation, especially the warning given in verse 25.

<sup>25</sup> Woe to you who are full,  
For you shall hunger. (Luke 6:25)

In 1 Corinthians 6, God equates our over-indulgence with food right along with other vile sins of the body, especially the sin of sexual immorality. Listen!

<sup>12</sup>All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. <sup>13</sup>Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup>And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? (1 Corinthians 6:12-15)

And then also in Proverbs 28:7 we read,

<sup>7</sup>Whoever keeps the law is a discerning son,  
But a companion of gluttons shames his father. (Proverbs 28:7)

For you and me who often have an abundance of food on our table each day, God is warning us to be very cautious with the manner in which we indulge ourselves with it.

. . . . But with all of this being said, returning to the words of our scripture text for today, they speak first about the matter of being without food, of hungering. Verse 21,

<sup>21</sup>Blessed are you who hunger now,  
For you shall be filled. (Luke 6:21)

What is supposed to be our response to that special and unique form of suffering? We who generally have plenty can only imagine the misery that is being suffered by those in real hunger and need. And I must tell you that I have no special word from the Lord for you today about those suffering souls, except to say that it is up to you and me who have plenty to reach out and to supply them with the food they need.

There are many organizations whose mission it is to bring food to those who hunger, Food for the Hungry, Feed the Children, Compassion International and many, many more. For \$30 or so a month, you can support a child and help them with their hunger. My wife and I do that in support of three little girls.

And while here in America the need may not be as obvious as that which we see in the third-world countries, there are still many, even in our own neighborhoods that suffer from hunger, some of them elderly, on low fixed income, some of them of a different race and some of different nationalities.

It seems easiest for you and me to reach out to the elderly who are in need, and we should. Most often, they will not tell us that they are hungry. Our job is to find

them and to bring them a share of our food. They may be as close as next door or at least within a few houses of us.

So, as we plan to make a pot of soup, or perhaps to barbeque hamburgers or even a steak, we should ask them if we can bring them some. They may at first refuse our offer, but we should keep asking.

A moment ago, I said that all of these matters of life, while physical in nature, are inescapably spiritual. And we need to be careful to allow the Spirit of God to speak to us personally and intimately about them.

To do that, God must be allowed full and complete access to our heart, to our soul and to our mind. It is only then that He will be able to reveal the real truth that lies below the surface of the common matters of life.

In this matter of hunger, yes, it is first of all very physical in its demands upon us, but it is also emotional and spiritual. And there is a right and a Godly response that should be taken towards it.

What should our response be? Our response should first be to draw near unto God and to listen for His "still small voice". But how do that? How do we draw near to God?

I recall an incident a few years ago, in connection with a national call to prayer, some of our staff and students at French Camp were challenged to participate in a one-day "fast" as they prayed. One student that I was discipling at the time chose to take part in the fast and was quickly brought to the realities of hunger. Even before his usual lunch time, he began to suffer. Simply knowing that he would not be able to eat lunch plagued his thoughts and his time of fasting quickly ended.

In last week's message, we spoke about how our commitment to "tithe" is a first test of our attitude towards money. And that is also true concerning "fasting". Fasting is a first test of our attitude towards food. And (listen) both are solely intended as a unique and intimate way of drawing nearer to the person of God.

I know that we considered the sacrament of "fasting" in a very recent message, but here in these words, God has given us reason for more consideration of the matter. And so, if you will bear with me, we'll spend just a few more minutes considering this matter of fasting. And perhaps in our doing that, we'll gain just a little more insight into the rigors of real hunger.

We'll begin by noting the words in Matthew chapter 6 where Jesus spoke about fasting. There He said,

<sup>16</sup> . . . when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>17</sup>But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Matthew 6:16-18)

Again, may I emphasize that "fasting" is not intended to be just one more "religious ritual", and it is not intended to be a show of public support for those who are less fortunate throughout our world, or some other such exercise, although we may do it for those and other reasons from time to time without being sinful in our efforts.

No, the biblical intent of fasting is to involve ourselves in a deeply intimate and personal interchange with the very person of God, no other reason, no other purpose.

But the question needs to be asked, "Why fast? What takes place within our bodies, our souls, our spirits, as we fast, that is so important to an intimate interaction with God?"

The answer to that question is a simple one. As we eat, the nutrients within our food quietly and pleasurably satiate and satisfy our biological systems, so much so that our senses lose much of their "sensitivity". We then go throughout our day completely unaware of many of the sensitive matters of daily life.

Our food has become a sedative to us, a form of mild, mind-altering drug, ever-so-slightly "numbing" our senses.

How do I know that that takes place? It becomes most discernible when we involve ourselves in an extended fast. The longer we go without food the more sensitive and alert our mind becomes.

I have found that by the third day of a fast, my mind is able to perceive and to understand things that I never even thought about before.

It is then that God is able to invade the otherwise preoccupied recesses of my mind and begin to communicate real truths to me.

Folks, that is what fasting is really all about, fully opening up our hearts and minds and souls to the Spirit of Christ and allowing Him to examine the thoughts and intents that reside there.

Perhaps for those of us who will probably not experience the pangs of real hunger during the normal course of our daily life, these words in today's text can serve to draw us into regular times of fasting, and there, begin to truly understand the heart of God.

But with all these things being said about "fasting", may we return for a moment to the scripture text that we are considering here today. Jesus said in verse 21,

<sup>21</sup>Blessed are you who hunger now,  
For you shall be filled. (Luke 6:21)

And also, He warned, but

<sup>25</sup>Woe to you who are full,  
For you shall hunger. (Luke 6:25)

In these words, God is giving us His instructions in righteousness. Here, He is assuring us who have truly given our hearts to Christ, that while yes, there often may be times of real hunger within our bodies, He will always be faithful to give us all that we really need.

And also, hidden deeply within these words is an assurance that for those of us who do "hunger and thirst for His righteousness" He will be faithful to give us all that we will need for our souls.

But again, He also leaves us with a warning about both the needs of our bodies and the needs of our souls, a warning that if we get the feeling that we are "full" and that we don't need God's provisions, then we will experience hunger like we have never experienced it before, both in our bodies and especially within our souls.

Listen again, and we will close! First the blessing . . .

<sup>21</sup>Blessed are you who hunger now,  
For you shall be filled. (Luke 6:21)

And then also, the warning, But

<sup>25</sup>Woe to you who are full,  
For you shall hunger. (Luke 6:25)



May we pray!