



TRUTH IN LOVE

Shedding Light on the Word of God

Who's Hungry?

Matthew 5:6

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

Most Americans are starving to death. I don't mean physically. The recent reports say that physically, most Americans eat way too much. Obesity is at an all-time high. But these overfed bodies contain malnourished spirits. Spiritually, we are more gaunt and malnourished than the famine victims of sub-Saharan Africa.

American Christians are surrounded by a smorgasbord of delicacies and tasty delights. There are loaves of fresh baked bread (John 6:48), piles of fruit (Gal 5:22-23), gallons of pure white milk (1 Pet 2:2), cascades of crystal water (John 4:13-14), and steaming slabs of roasted meat (Heb 5:14).

But, bypassing such a healthy, spiritual diet, we eat Twinkies, cotton candy and soda pop, then wonder why the spiritual life is not all we had hoped for. The reason is the food we are eating. We attend churches where the meat of the Word is not carefully and systematically taught, but instead jokes and stories are standard fare. We read Christian self-help books and religious fiction rather than soak daily in the Word of God which is full of absolute truth. No wonder we're starving.

In Matthew 5:6, Jesus says, **Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.** He is providing yet another prescription for happiness. Does your life lack the joy and happiness that you think should be yours? The remedy for a lack of happiness may be what Jesus says here: **Hunger and thirst for righteousness.** In other words, realize the sickly condition of your spirit. Look through the camera lens of National Geographic and see your scrawny limbs, your worm-filled stomach, and your vacant gaze. If you lack spiritual energy, it's because you are spiritually hungry!

When people are physically hungry, they don't need to be told—they just know it. Spiritually hungry people know it too, but they try to fill the void in their soul by frantically searching for happiness and fulfillment in other areas of life. Recreation, possessions and entertainment are just a few.

When a non-Christian believes in Jesus for eternal life, they get a taste of what is to come (Heb 6:4-5). But a taste is not a meal, and a single meal is not enough. Spiritual hunger must continually be fed, just like physical hunger.

The Christian who has tasted the heavenly gift, and who wants more, must only sit down and eat. There is a table before you filled with good things. The Scripture references listed above describing spiritual food make it plain we feed our souls by reading, studying, and obeying God's Word, by praying, by sharing fellowship with Christians of similar desires, and allowing the Holy Spirit to make us like Christ.

But notice the order that Jesus has taken his disciples through. First, they must become poor in spirit, desperate for the things of God (5:3). If they do, they mourn over their sin (5:4), to the point that they meekly get rid of it for the sake of God's ways (5:5). But now that they've gotten rid of all that sin, there's a tangible void in their lives. If they don't fill it with something—and quick!—they'll go back to the junk food they used to eat. So Jesus says, "hunger and thirst for something that will last. For something that will sustain you."

Many people are not hungry because they have not been emptied. They are still trying to satisfy themselves on cotton candy, cookies and coke. I have two daughters, and I have found that if I give them a cookie and some candy an hour before dinner, they aren't hungry for the good meal that has been prepared.

Examine your life. What is in your life that could be given up in order to spend more time with God, in the Word, and in prayer? Give up that television show. Read the newspaper less. Wake up half an hour earlier. Put down that fiction book, and pick up the Book. You may not notice your hunger until you start to feed your spirit. And as soon as it gets a taste of the real milk and meat of the Word of God, it will ravenously crave for more.

And as you feed yourself what you really need, Christ promises you will be filled. Your excitement and joy in the Christian life will increase. Your ability to resist temptation will strengthen. Your desire for the fleeting things of this world will diminish. Your fellowship and intimacy with God will amplify. There is almost no greater Christian experience than being "full." So open the Word, and dig in.