

Jesus spoke about those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Sunday 6th April 2014

***“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
(Mat.5:6)***

Beloved in the Lord,

What are the deepest desires of your heart? What are you chasing after in your life? David writes in the 42nd Psalm: ***“As the deer pants for the water brooks,***

So my soul pants for You, O God.

² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;

When shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalm 42:1-2)

Does your soul thirst for God? Is the longing in your heart expressed in the words of the great hymn “Nearer my God to Thee?” If the answer is a resounding yes, then to quote Jesus, you are blessed. There is a beautiful promise attached to this word of blessing from Jesus, namely that you shall be satisfied.

We are created in God’s image and likeness. We are created to live in fellowship; in a close loving relationship with God. It is sin that has broken the bond between us. Sin has separated man from God and has caused a major rift. There is a huge chasm between God and man.

The fact that man sinned and cut himself out of fellowship, did by no means change God’s desire to fellowship with man. God placed deep within the heart of every man a desire to know Him. He has placed within us a need for Him. This explains why deep down every person innately knows that there is a higher force or being out there. Some diligently seek to find this God and some don’t, but all have an inkling, a nagging feeling.

In order to restore fellowship with God, Jesus came into the world as a man, to shed His blood upon a cross, to pay our sin debt. When we believe in Jesus, when we repent of our sin, and confess Jesus to be our Lord and Saviour, then we are made righteous. We are justified. That is God considers us to be just as if we had not sinned. Through Jesus blood, fellowship is restored and we live in a loving relationship with God through Jesus.

It is through the precious blood of Jesus that we are saved. It is through His blood that we are reconciled to God.

When we are reconciled to God, then our natural desire is to grow in Him. To go deeper in our relationship with Him. The more we do, the less we are drawn by the things of this world. As the song says: “Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”

A person who has tasted God’s grace, has experienced God’s blessing, who has received true peace and joy, wants more of the same.

We cannot live on yesterday's blessings, or last Sunday's blessings. We need to experience God afresh every single day. Every day we should draw water from the well of life, be refreshed by His Word anew.

Jeremiah wrote: ***The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,
For His compassions never fail.***

²³ They are new every morning;

Great is Your faithfulness.

²⁴ "The Lord is my portion," says my soul,

"Therefore I have hope in Him."

²⁵ The Lord is good to those who wait for Him,

To the person who seeks Him.

²⁶ It is good that he waits silently

For the salvation of the Lord. (Lamentations 3:22-26)

I would like to point out a few things that Jeremiah says here. Firstly that the Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease. Some translations render this passage as they have not yet ceased, or not yet ended. The idea is that one day there will be an end to this time of grace. Since the Resurrection of Jesus we have been living in the time of Grace. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. One day this era will end. Christ shall return to take away His church. Those who have rejected Him will find themselves left out of God's eternal glory.

That is why there is a sense of urgency in the Bible.

"Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,

"Today if you hear His voice,

⁸ Do not harden your hearts... (Hebrews 3:7-8a)

Paul wrote something similar in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians:

"And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— ² for He says,

***"At the acceptable time I listened to you,
And on the day of salvation I helped you."***

Behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation"— (2.Cor.6:1-2)

We should never put off being reconciled to God, because tomorrow may be too late.

The second thing that Jeremiah is telling us is that God's mercies are new every morning, and that God's faithfulness is great.

We read in Proverbs: ***“Blessed is the man who listens to me,
Watching daily at my gates,
Waiting at my doorposts.***

³⁵ ***“For he who finds me finds life***

And obtains favor from the Lord. (Proverbs 8:34-35)

Do you want to be blessed? Do you desire to live? Do you seek God’s favour? Then from day to day read His Holy Word.

Don’t live on last weeks, or even yesterdays bread. Come and have fresh bread daily. Freshly baked bread is so much better than stale bread. Draw deeply from the well of God’s Word every single day. God’s loving kindnesses are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness. Don’t deny yourself His blessing.

With God you will never be disappointed. The one who comes to Him daily is blessed. That person has a strong and healthy spirit. For our physical body to remain strong and healthy we need to nourish it regularly; so too our spirit.

Only a corpse no longer eats or drinks or needs any nourishment because it is dead. If you do not hunger and thirst after God and His righteousness, then you must check and see if you are not spiritually dead. Spiritual death occurs when the heart is hardened toward God. Continual rejection leads to a hardening of the heart and eventually you may be abandoned by God. What a terrible and frightening thought.

Billy Graham wrote in a sermon:

“Hunger is a sign of life. Corpses neither hunger nor thirst. It is possible to so harden your heart, as in the case of Pharaoh, that you have no point of return. This hardening of one’s heart is a very dangerous process. Sin can so harden your heart toward God, that the heart loses any desire for God. The Bible calls this state “Abandoned by God...” If in your heart there still abides even a tiny amount of thirst for God and His righteousness, then that is a sign that your heart is not completely hardened and it is still able to receive Christ’s teaching. You are still able to hear the voice of The Holy Spirit.

Those who do not hunger and thirst for God, are not just dead in their trespasses and sins, but they are insensitive to the promptings of The Holy Spirit. They are under the threat of remaining in this unconscious state and finally being forever lost. A person once related to me his experience in the far North. He felt a numbness take over his arms and legs and had a great desire to simply lie down in the snow and go to sleep. Suddenly he realised what was happening, he was freezing to death. He summoned all of his last energy and jumping to his feet he began to run, and ran until the circulation returned. Had he not understood the danger he was in, and had not done something about it, he would have frozen to death.”

So far Billy Graham.

I think that these words are a call to each one of us to take a look at ourselves and see if we are not like this man in the snow, slowly dying.

As we have considered in previous sermons in this series, the simple solution is to turn our eyes upon Jesus. The more we focus upon Him, the more we will hunger and thirst after righteousness, and the more He will satisfy us with all that is good and wholesome.

I like to drink good coffee. Before I had ever tasted really good coffee, I drank instant coffee and thought it was ok. Oh, but once I had tasted real coffee, made properly from freshly ground beans, nothing else can satisfy.

A person who has never tasted God's goodness, has never experienced His love and greatness, satisfies himself with what the world offers. He doesn't know that it is inferior.

But once a person has experienced the fullness of God's blessings, there is no desire to return again to the lesser things this world has to offer.

That is why David writes: ***"O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!" (Psalm 34:8)***

When we do taste and see that the Lord is God, then we experience a growing desire for God and a lessening desire for the world. Then we are blessed. God has promised to meet all our needs.

I close with some words of wisdom from Billy Graham:

"If we do not feel a hunger or thirst, then that means that we have been unaware of the sin that has quietened our desire for fellowship with God. No matter how attractive the temptations of this world, they can never satisfy the deepest and truest longing of our soul. In realising our deepest desires we gain peace in our heart and satisfaction for our soul and mind. Only in fully surrendering to God and turning away from the counterfeit living water, do we drink from the real fountain of life."

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.