

Blessed Are the Hungry

Luke 6:21

June 18, 2017

Luke Chapter 6 and today, we're looking at the second beatitude in Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount. We spent, as you know, the last two weeks on that first beatitude, "Blessed are you who are poor, you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." And that really is the thesis verse for the beatitudes and the woes, and the whole section provides an introduction for the sermon, the entire sermon that follows.

For today, we're going to consider, as I said, that second beatitude, Luke 6:21, "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied." I find it especially fitting that before us this morning is the Lord's Table. We didn't necessarily plan that connection, to cover "Blessed are the hungry," on a Communion Sunday, but it is quite appropriate as we'll come to see.

But we'll want to, as we have done in the previous weeks, I want to start by looking at the text and reading that opening section of the beatitudes and woes together, which is Luke 6:20-26.

Jesus, "lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

"'But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.'"

He ends a sobering way to enter his sermon as he leaves us with those four woes. As we learned from verse 20, "Blessed are you

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who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," as I said, that is the thesis verse for the whole section, and Jesus used poverty, as we said, he used it as a vivid metaphor for those who are the true citizens of the kingdom of God. Those who are poor have recognized their spiritual destitution before God, and they realize the world has nothing whatsoever to contribute to their standing before God. So, they come to God as a beggar. They come to God reaching out for divine mercy, for pity even.

God is pleased to respond, to hurry to their aid and to freely give. When God looks upon these poor, he doesn't give begrudgingly, he doesn't give sparingly. He just throws open the floodgates of heaven. The poverty of God's people is so fully consumed by divine grace that any impoverished condition is utterly forgotten in the magnificent splendor in the kingdom of God.

And that is exactly what we find as we consider the second beatitude, "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied." Just this is huge reversal of fortune. As we enter in here, I just want to make a few grammatical observations

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before we get into our outline. It will really inform our outline. As you can see, verse 21, it contains two of those four beatitudes. And they're parallel with one another. The whole thing is structured in a parallel manner. They flow from the thesis verse in verse 20 and so they're closely connected with the theme.

And notice there, there's an already/not-yet pattern in these verses. They describe what's already true, that is the present reality of possessing the kingdom but one that has yet to be consummated. In other words, those who are the poor, verse 20, whatever condition of poverty they seem to have at present, it's not actually the case because they are currently, right now already possessors of an earthly kingdom of God. Then you get into verse 21, and yet, as verse 21, shows us plainly, there are two present realities, hungering and weeping, which are actual. They are real, but they are only temporary because one day they will be completely eclipsed by satisfaction and laughter.

And this is how we find ourselves today, beloved. If you're here today and you are a Christian, then you are currently right now in possession of the eternal kingdom of God. You may not have a good grasp on that all the time, but don't worry, it's not up to

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you. The King of that kingdom has a good grasp on you. He will never let you go. Your salvation is not up to you; it is up to him. And he will finish what he has started. That is the reality that we've been enabled by the grace of God to embrace by faith, the assurance of things we hope for, the conviction of things we do not yet see.

As a Christian, you yourself can attest to the present reality of your life, that there remains yet right now a hunger and a thirst. There's a longing and we heard it in the Psalm we read earlier, "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water," like the deserts of Judea where David was reflecting upon.

Or in the well-known opening of Psalm 42, "As the deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" And that is the longing that Jesus describes in this beatitude, "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." But hungering and weeping, those metaphors,

which by the way I should add are not always figures of speech, hungering and weeping are sometimes quite literal for believers during their sojourn on earth.

But nevertheless, as metaphors, hunger and thirst, weeping and sorrow, they describe and they summarize the present experience of every believer. Our present discomfort makes us long for consolation from God, which is coming when Christ returns, bringing with him the kingdom.

He's already inaugurated the kingdom, the rule of God on earth. And through us, he exercises that rule in our hearts, in our lives, in our churches; but he's going to return to make that rule a physical, fully manifest reality here on earth. And we rejoice to see that day speed along, don't we? Let me show you, though, in the grammar, just briefly. First notice in verse 21 where Jesus says, "Blessed are you who are hungry now," and "Blessed are you who weep now."

You, you can't see this so much in the English, but in the Greek text, those two descriptions are participles, that is, they are

verbal nouns. They have a verbal element to them. It's those who are hungering, those who are weeping. And this refers to a class of people. This refers to a certain group of people. They are the same people Jesus identifies as the poor, those who are already in possession of God's kingdom. So that's the group we're talking about.

Second, the participles, those who are hungering and those who are weeping, those are in the present tense. And that means that hungering and weeping is an ongoing condition. This is a continual reality for these people, so they are continually hungering, continually weeping. And for the present time, as Christians, we understand this. There is no lasting relief here in this life and that is to say, that our consolation is not yet, not yet.

However, there is a third observation we can make here. Jesus gives us confident hope for a change in that reality, and it's a certain hope. Notice that little three-letter temporal adverb, all you know what I'm talking about, right? "Now." It's the word, now. Write that down in your notes, three-letter temporal

adverb and you will impress your friends at dinner parties. They'll say, wow, so you really paid attention in junior high grammar! The word, now, "Blessed are you who are hungry now." "Blessed are you who weep now." Jesus is using there a temporal adverb, now, to signal the fact that hungering and weeping is only temporary. And lest we wonder, he immediately follows the "now" situation with future tense verbs, you shall be satisfied, you shall laugh. In other words, wait patiently, change is coming soon.

Not only does Jesus give us a hope that is a confident hope, but fourth observation here out of the grammar, he gives us an abundant hope because the current condition of hunger is going to be consummated by full satisfaction. The current condition of weeping is going to be consummated by laughter. Such a profound and lasting change of our present circumstances. And that is a reminder of Messianic restoration promises, all of which are lavish and all of which are overwhelmingly rich. All will be fulfilled when the kingdom arrives in all its fullness, all its splendor, all its glory.

Notice, fifthly, observations just here out of the, what's written there in the grammar. Notice the passive voice in that beatitude promise, "You shall be satisfied." You shall be satisfied. Who is the one who will provide our satisfaction? We might identify that as a divine passive. We're not the ones who are earning or gaining our own satisfaction; we're the ones who are just recipients of satisfaction. It is God who is the hidden actor in that verb, not named, but he's there. He is the one who satisfies us, right? And that seals it, that seals it. If the eternal God is the one behind this promise, then we can embrace what Jesus says here with full confidence and know that God himself will provide abundant satisfaction to all of us who are dissatisfied now.

So what we're gonna do is combine these several observations into two points for our outline. Just two outline points, very simple, nothing fancy. We're gonna identify our hunger first and then we're gonna find out how to satisfy it. So here's our first point, you can write this down in your notes: Identify in yourself the pangs of hunger. Identify in yourself the pangs of hunger. Jesus is using the concept of physical hunger, the

desire to satisfy physical hunger pangs, to identify the deepest longings of the human spirit, which only God can satisfy.

And before we talk about that, we want to look here first at Jesus' imagery here, which are the source of his metaphor. We need to understand the literal sense of the hunger he identifies. The word Jesus uses here in the text is translated as, you who are hungry; it comes from the verb *peinaó* or *peinaó*. And sometimes it, it refers in many cases in the New Testament to literal physical hunger, sometimes quite severe hunger. For example, when Jesus was tested for forty days in the desert, he ate nothing during those days. And Luke tells us, Luke 4:2, that "When," those days were ended, "he was hungry." This is the word right here, *peinaó* verb.

The disciples, walking through some grain fields on a Sabbath day, verse 1 of this chapter, chapter 6, they were hungry, and they picked heads of grain, rubbed them together in their hands and ate. And when Jesus defended their actions to the critical scribes and Pharisees, remember he appealed to David's actions when David fled from Saul. David and his men were on the run,

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they were, they were low-provisioned, and he needed to feed his men and in Luke 6:3, Jesus said, "He was hungry." Same verb, *peinaó*.

The Apostle Paul used the same word to describe his shabby treatment as an apostle. He wasn't, puttin' on the Ritz. He was 1 Corinthians 4:11, "to the present hour we hunger," *peinaó*, "we thirst, we're poorly dressed and," we're, "buffeted and homeless." It's a word that's usually cast like that in, in difficult and desperate circumstances.

Now I believe this concept of hunger, this deep, gnawing, sharp-panged hunger in the gut, feelings of weakness then that accompany that condition, even feelings of desperation that arise in the soul out of hunger and crying out in anxiety, I must have food or I will die.

Listen, I believe that is the kind of hunger that very few of us in America have ever experienced in our lifetimes. Ask some of the senior, really senior saints. Some of them perhaps who've been children of the Great Depression. They might be able to

describe that feeling to you or they might know those who knew that feeling and had it described to them. Ask those who have found themselves in desperate situations while maybe in foreign lands, while on military campaigns, and they might be able to tell you about that feeling of desperation as well.

For Jesus, though, speaking to the crowd who had gathered before him, they all knew this feeling of hunger from way down south in Jerusalem, all the way up north in Tyre and Sidon. Most of the people who were before him, if not all of them, they had experienced hunger like this. Or if they hadn't personally felt it, they at least knew many people who had, and not only that, but severe hunger, deprivation, even starvation, those were realities that lived on in their social, cultural memory because they were woven into the fabric of their history.

In recent memory of people who lived in Palestine, that whole region, they knew the campaigns and the sieges by the Greek and Roman armies, and that meant deprivation, sometimes very severe deprivation, such that it was common for famine to ensue. And then more lives were lost from the famine conditions resulting

from war than those who had actually died on the battlefields. That would be illustrated once again in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. More than a million people died, and most of them died by starvation.

When you go back into the Old Testament, you find this Greek word *peinaó*, Jesus uses, it's used in the, in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Septuagint uses *peinaó* to translate two different Hebrew words. The first is *raeb*, which mostly means famine, or it could refer to the conditions of famine or resulting from famine. You read in Genesis 41:55, as a result of the famine that Joseph prophesied in Egypt, it says that, "All the land of Egypt was famished," that's the word *raeb*. "And the people cried to Pharaoh for bread."

Such desperate conditions in the ancient world meant that Pharaoh might have been very nervous about revolt, except that God had sent Joseph to Egypt to spare the land and to spare his brothers and to sustain the twelve tribes of Israel. But famine means severe, maddening hunger which drives people to do

desperate things, and that's why governments and kingdoms are concerned to make sure the citizens are reasonably provided for because desperate people do desperate things like execute ineffective rulers.

So just to show you how desperate things can become, there are a number of references in the Old Testament we could turn to, but let's turn to 2 Kings 6:24, 2 Kings 6:24. We will just look at one of many. This is going to illustrate how severe this hunger drive is, especially in famine conditions, how desperate hunger, hunger-driven people can become.

Look at 2 Kings 6 starting in verse 24, it says, "Afterward Benhadad king of Syria mustered his entire army and went up and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria, as they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, the fourth part of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver." That is pretty desperate times. "As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, Help me, O my, my lord O king! "And he said, 'If

the Lord will not help you, how shall I help you? From the threshing floor, from the winepress?’”

He’s saying, look, don’t look to me, I have nothing. “king asked her, ‘What is your trouble?’ So she answered, ‘This woman said to me, “Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.” So we boiled my son and ate him. And on the next day I said to her, “Give your son, that we may eat him.” But she has hidden her son.’ When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes.”

You can stop there. Look, that is a hunger, that, that is so intense and severe that it turns delicate mothers into vicious cannibals. We don’t know that kind of hunger, do we? Not even close. And we can give thanks to God that in this country he has spared us from many decades from that kind of desperation. But that hunger drive, it’s within all of us. It just takes the right conditions to bring it out. That hunger drive, under drastic conditions, can drive people to do unthinkable things, to commit unspeakable acts.

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So listen, after forty days without food, roaming the desert, Jesus felt that kind of gut-piercing, soul-splitting hunger, and we cannot understand the severity of pain and weakness that he endured while going through that period of testing and trial in the wilderness. I mean, the physical thing is, is one issue, but the spiritual suffering and agony he went through is completely another and add to that the testing provided by the temptations of Satan.

We've never been there. Rather than commit acts of heinous sin in his condition of physical depletion and desperation, Jesus maintained perfect righteousness. Keep that in mind as we come a little later to the Lord's table. Keep it in mind as a point of meditation and gratitude to give thanks to him for fulfilling all righteousness that is now handed to us, a precious gift.

There's another Hebrew word, not just the word *raeb*, which is referring to a famine but another Hebrew word that describes the feeling of desperation and exhaustion that comes from being hungry and thirsty it's the word *ayeph*. *Ayeph*, the Septuagint uses the word *peinaó* to translate that word as well. You can

almost hear the sound of exhaustion in that Hebrew word *ayeph*, like panting or grasping for breath. This is the kind of physical exhaustion that weary travelers could feel in that time at journey's end after they have walked dozens of miles, hundreds of miles, even, sometimes through scorching desert heat.

The provisions were depleted at the end of the journey. No more water. They were just longing for satisfaction of their physical cravings. Some of those who were listening to Jesus that day on the Sermon on the Mount no doubt felt that way when they entered Capernaum. Maybe not as desperate, but after traveling great distances, they also needed food and water to restore their strength.

Again, there are many references I could point you to, but let's, let's just look at one of them and go to Psalm 107, Psalm 107. This is one of my favorite psalms. I absolutely love Psalm 107. But the psalmist here paints vivid pictures in different kinds of, of need, people who look up to God. In that first section, the psalmist paints this vivid picture of God's

steadfast love to restore the weary traveler. This is someone who has, who has been wandering in the desert because he's lost and he's desperate.

Look at the first part of this, starting in verse 1. "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love ensures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered from the lands and from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south."

You know who those, that is describing? That's us. That's us Gentiles are included in that number. "Some" verse 4, "wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way until they reached a city to dwell in. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things."

It's not until you reach that point of utter desperation that you cry to the Lord for help, for relief, and God is pleased to visit you with his mercy and his grace. He takes our little lost hands in his big guiding hand, and he leads us out by a straight way into a city of plenty where we are restored, our longing souls are satisfied, our hunger is relieved. He fills us with good things. Listen, that's what this word *peinaó* pictures, especially when you read the fuller version, Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst." It's a condition of physical depletion, desperation that few of us know, but many throughout human history have experienced.

I came across a fascinatingly vivid illustration of the kind of weariness captured in this Hebrew word *ayeph*, the one translated by the Greek *peinaó*, which Jesus uses. The scene is set in the battle for Sheria fought during World War I on November 6th and 7th in 1917. Tel el Sheria is about halfway between Beersheba and Gaza, which is west of the Dead Sea. It's an extremely arid, barren part of the earth.

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The story is told by Major Vivian Gilbert, who described the whole campaign in his book, *The Romance of the Last Crusade*. The chapter on that battle is called, *The Wells of Sheria*, like wells of water. It describes some of the weariness and desperation that Jesus described with this word *peinaó*, when he said, "Blessed are the hungry." Major Gilbert was leading a combined force of troops from Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. And they were on the march north from Beersheba to push the Ottoman Turks out of Palestine. They had the Turks on the run. They needed to press their advantage as they chased the Turks through the desert lest they be allowed to regroup.

All their supplies, including the most precious commodity of food, but namely water, more valuable in the hot sands of the desert than the purest gold, their supplies were being carried by a caravan of camels. But to keep their tactical advantage, they had to press the attack, and they had to give chase with speed and haste. The consequence of staying on the heels of the Turks to win the war, win the battle as Major Gilbert writes, is that, quote, "we soon outdistanced our camel water convoy, lost touch with them and marched for a whole day without water."

He continues, Major Gilbert continues here, quote, "The day previous we had had half a bottle of drinking water each and the following day, our bottles hung empty at our sides. That day turned out to be one of the hottest of the year. We had the greatest difficulty in dragging our tired limbs through the clogging sand. The sun blazed piteously from a brazen sky. Our heads ached, our eyes became bloodshot and dim in the blinding glare reflected from the sand.

"After a time, our tongues began to swell so they seemed to fill the inside of our mouths, which had gone dry. It was with great difficulty that we could speak. And then our lips commenced to swell. They turned a purplish black and burst. Some of the men went temporarily blind from the glare of the sun, the sand, the lack of water. A few fell out by the wayside and these we never saw again."

When they finally arrived at Tel el Sheria, the Turks took their stand because of the wells that were there. Turkish and British soldiers alike, all of them were weary and exhausted and yet the fighting was fierce because they all knew what was at stake.

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Gilbert writes, quote, "The Turks were holding onto Sheria like grim death because they realized that if they gave it up, they would have to retreat over many miles of waterless desert."

As for his own forces, he wrote, "We fought that day as men fight for their lives." The British ended up winning, but Gilbert continues, "We entered the Sheria station practically on the heels of the retreating Turks. The first objects that met our view were the great stone cisterns in the station yard filled with tons of cold, clear drinking water. In the still night air, the sound of water running into the tanks could be distinctly heard, maddening in its tantalizing nearness, yet not a man murmured when orders were given for the various battalions to be fallen in, in line two deep facing the stone cisterns.

They first let the men who had pulled guard duty that night, they let them drink first, while the others waited and then it took four hours for all of them to get a drink. "And in all that time," Gilbert noted, "We had been standing just about seven yards from thousands of gallons of water, yet not a single man broke from the ranks or tried to get a drink out of his turn."

That is a remark about true discipline, which is a tribute to the leadership, but it's also a tribute to the power of the hope that they had that very soon they'd be satisfied. Relief is just a short distance away. Major Gilbert summarized the account with these words, "In the Bible one reads constantly of water, and it is always spoken of as one of the most wonderful things in life. As a boy, I used to wonder why so much importance was attached to water, but you quickly realize the value of water in Palestine, especially if you happen to be fighting there. I believe we learned, we all learned our first real Bible lesson on that march from Beersheba to Sheria wells."

Nothing like real life experience to help the imagery of the Bible come alive, right? And that is how Jesus was able to communicate so effectively to the people in front of him from Judah, Jerusalem, and Tyre and Sidon, because they all knew what it was to be physically depleted, whether weary and exhausted, personally lacking food and water, or their familiarity with history that informed them, the suffering of hunger and thirst during a siege as a result of famine.

So when Jesus used this word *peinaó*, it created a very vivid image in their mind, resonated powerfully with them. Again, Jesus is not here though, they would have known this, we've seen this, he's not talking merely about physical hunger and thirst here. It's a metaphor. Jesus is talking about a spiritual hunger and thirst, and one that can only be satisfied in God. It's not satisfied in this life. It's not satisfied by people. It's not satisfied by a marriage. It's not satisfied by having children. It's not satisfied by having grandchildren. It's not satisfied by any of the things this world has to offer, no sights, no views, no vacations, no, no pleasures. As good as all those things are, as wholesome as all those things can be, they do not satisfy the soul.

How do I know that Jesus is using this as a metaphor? Because that's the clear context of these beatitudes, along with those corresponding four woes. That's what we learned in our study of "Blessed are the poor," over the last few weeks, poverty, destitution. This provides the perfect picture of Jesus' true disciples. They find no hope in this world, they have no self-reliance, no reliance on riches or wealth; they simply extend

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the hands of a beggar, empty and open wide, looking upward to God in faith.

And as I said, God is pleased to give them not only what they're asking for then, but the entire kingdom of God. It's that spiritual sense pictured in, first in the metaphor of poverty that leads us into verse 21; the hunger, the thirst, the weeping, the mourning, all will be forgotten when the kingdom of God arrives in its fullness.

By contrast, those in verse 25 who are full now, those who are laughing now, when the kingdom of God comes, they'll be judged. They will be going eternally hungry. They will be suffering eternal sorrow and there will be no relief. I think last week we talked about the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16. The rich man filled in this life, Lazarus begging at his gate. When the end came, their roles were reversed, fortunes reversed, and the rich man suffered in torment while Lazarus was at Abraham's bosom, fully satisfied.

And the picture is, picture those men at the Sheria wells, fighting the Turks. They are thirsty beyond belief, tongues swelled, parched lips bursting. There was the rich man in hell, asking for Father Abraham to send Lazarus down to just touch the tip of his finger in water and touch it to his tongue because he's torment with thirst. Whether it's Matthew's version, Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," or Luke's simpler more direct version, "Blessed are those who are hungry," Jesus made both statements, by the way, it's a picture of the same spiritual reality. Hunger and thirst here are metaphors for intense longing, intense craving.

One commentator put it this way, "Jesus could easily have described his disciples as those who want to be obedient or desire holiness, but such language simply wasn't powerful enough." I would say, to grab our attention; it's not powerful enough. "The true disciple hungers and thirsts for righteousness and he longs to live a godly life as much as a starving man longs for his next piece of bread, or a parched tongue yearns for a drop of water." End quote.

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Among the true disciples of Jesus Christ, there is within us this gnawing sense of dissatisfaction, this discontent with anything this world has to offer. And there is, as we feel it, this pervasive and abiding need to be satisfied, fully satisfied, fully contented, and it's yet unrealized. But we long to be filled, right? We long to be filled. And if you feel that, blessed are you. Blessed are you, for you shall be satisfied. When the kingdom of God arrives in power, all hunger will come to an end for God's people because they will be satisfied.

That's where we come to our second point for this morning. You can write this down in your notes: Look to Christ to satisfy your hunger. Look to Christ to satisfy your hunger. Have you ever stopped to wonder why God created us to hunger? Hunger is not a result of the fall. Just making that point here. It's not a result of the fall. Hunger predated the fall because God created, Genesis 1:29, prior to the fall, "Every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit." And God told Adam and Eve, "You shall have them for food." Genesis 2:9, "Out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food."

And then he told Adam in verse 16, "You may surely eat of every tree in the garden," excepting one, but every tree in the garden. He could have created mankind without tongues, without taste buds, without digestive tracts and all the mechanisms for consuming and processing food, but he didn't. He gave us the sensation of hunger, and he provided the food. He even provided the food before he created us, anticipating what he would do with us, giving us the sensation of hunger. He created the, the provision before he created the need. Isn't that interesting? That's a principle all throughout Scripture, by the way.

He also created taste buds. Everything could just taste like rice cakes for us, but it doesn't. Thank you Lord for not making everything taste like rice cakes. He created taste buds to enjoy the flavor of food. He created nerves to enjoy the different textures and consistencies that flow through our lips. Hunger is by divine design. After the Fall, God added animals to the menu. Genesis 9:3, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything."

Why add the animals? Because maybe in a post-Fall world and a cursed earth there would be many occasions in which the earth wouldn't produce all that man needs to survive, so adding meat expanded the menu as an act of grace. It tastes pretty good, too. God divided the animal kingdom into clean and unclean animals for Israel, for a time, to teach them discernment, to keep them from certain alliances and treaties, as well, with other people who ate whatever they wanted.

But then in Acts 10, after the birth of the church, a unified body of Jewish and Gentile Christians, there was again one occasion when Peter became hungry, Acts 10:10. He wanted something to eat. And while the people he was staying with were preparing some food for him, he fell into a trance, and God, there, as you know, brought the sheet of animals down and all kinds of animals, clean and unclean. And God thereby removed the Jewish dietary restrictions not only for Peter, but for the whole church.

Now, pretty much everything is open game. Even strange looking crustaceans from the bottom of the ocean. Or tentacle-covered

creatures like octopus and squid or even disgusting things, if you'd like, in Papa New Guinea like larvae and locusts and all those kinds of things. Or as I have eaten before, balut, which is duck embryo. It's actually pretty good. Asians, you have to know, Asians have the most interesting menus in the whole entire world. I don't know if you know that. Travel and see and try.

But I'm good with steaks and burgers, meat and potatoes. And I've got biblical warrant to keep the vegans off my back, because Paul, Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:3 and 4 that God created foods to "be received with thanksgiving by those who know and believe the truth. For everything, everything created by God is good, and nothing," not one thing, "is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer."

So I thank God for every steak, every hamburger, and every other food I'm supposedly not allowed to eat at my age. The point is, though, that God designed us to eat, to feel hunger and to eat. The eating is a pleasant experience, isn't it? Digestion isn't

always pleasant, at least on this side of the Fall. But eating is quite nice.

The question is why? Why did God design us with a need for regular food, a regular need for food, to hunger for food and then to satisfy our hunger by eating food. Several quick points here if you want to jot these down. First, the daily need for food reminds us that we're dependent creatures. We're dependent. We're not self-sufficient as God is, asay, aseity of God. We're not able to sustain ourselves without life-giving nutrients. We require food and water and in pretty regular increments, too.

As the psalmist says in Psalm 104:27-29, he says, "All," creatures, "look to you, to give them their food in due season. And, "when you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. But when you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust."

So that brings a second point here of why God created food and our need for hunger, the fact of our dependency should produce

in us a humility, humility. In times past, before the modern age, when we lived our lives much closer to the food we eat, like closer to the grain fields and the livestock pens, we recognized more immediately that God is the one and only one who grows our grain and then keeps our livestock fat and healthy.

So we prayed to him in humility, asking for his mercy every single day to keep us fed. We prayed quaint sounding prayers like this one, "Give us this day our daily bread." We didn't presume upon the future. We found contentment in daily provision and we sought the Lord's grace in an attitude of humility.

Third, the need for daily food, the repeated request that God would provide our daily bread that instilled a lesson in us over and over and over again that God is the source of all of our provision. He's the one who sustains us. He's the one who satisfies us. We learn that with every meal.

Fourth, the food that God gives, we learn this by repeated testing, it tastes good. Otherwise, we don't generally eat it, unless our moms make us eat it, things like, foul things like

brussel sprouts and those small bitterly revolting cabbages. Medieval, medieval moms used to punish their really bad children by making them eat brussel sprouts. But today, can I get an amen? Can I get a witness? Some people today, it's inexplicable really, but they've added it to the menu. Some have even tried to trick us by wrapping it in bacon. I am not fooled.

So why did God create good food? Brussel sprouts, that's the Fall. But good food, why did he create good food and create us to eat it and then create us to crave it when we go without it? Because God intended to give us daily, practical, enjoyable lessons about himself, his goodness, his grace, his power, his faithfulness to provide and that physical repeated lesson instilled in us over a lifetime of eating is to point us to a deeper spiritual reality, to recognize that within us that more profound spiritual craving that we all have, to know our God, to worship him, and enjoy in gratitude, and to be fully satisfied, and contented in him, that we go to him for that as well.

That's why Jesus told his disciples, this is speaking to us as well, beloved, he told his disciples, these inheritors of the

kingdom, that their sense of spiritual hunger is a good thing and it is a reason to call them blessed. Why? Because that spiritual craving points to a future of full satisfaction. As Paul told the Romans, "The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." That's the true consummation of all kingdom citizens, to find all satisfaction and full satisfaction in his kingdom and his righteousness.

And in the present age, as indicated in verse 21 by that little three-letter temporal adverb, now, we sense our lack, we sense our need, we sense our hunger. Luke is writing for the Gentiles, and he's focused on the hunger craving, which all Gentiles know and understand and that will one day be satisfied. He counted on the work of the Holy Spirit as they read this, diligent study, pious meditation of his Gentile readers, he counted on that to combine to infer from the context that hunger is a metaphor for spiritual craving.

And Matthew he's writing for Jews in the Sermon on the Mount. And he's focused on that which they were creating in their

socio-religious context. The Jews lived in a society that taught them the Law of Moses and hammered home to them all their life long the need to live up to the standards of the righteousness found in the law of God. They thought it was all lived out by the Pharisees. Jesus told them, no, no, you're wrong. They don't get it at all.

Let me tell you where true righteousness is. It's not just a matter of external behavior, it's a matter of the heart, which transforms your life externally, too. But it's a matter of the heart first. But the more these Jews heard the law preached, the more it stirred up within them and provoked their sin nature as it did with Paul, as he testifies in Romans 7:7-25. Because of the preaching of the law, which they heard all the time, the pious Jews who listened to Jesus that day, they knew they didn't have the righteous perfection that God required, so they craved it. They understood because of the teaching of truth over many centuries, the true need, where it really lay.

Gentiles needed to go through that stage, that process and learn that. But whether Jew or Gentile, whether hungering and

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thirsting for righteousness, or hungering and thirsting for the God who alone gives, and sustains, and satisfies, God has created us to be satisfied in him and in him alone. So with that in mind, look back at Luke 6:21. Listen again to the promise of Christ. "Blessed are you who are hungry now for you shall be satisfied." That word satisfied; interesting word. The verb is *chortazo*; *chortazo* and it means to feed, or fill up, or satisfy, or to eat one's fill. Originally, in Classical Greek, which is 500 years, roughly, previous to this time, but it was a word that was pretty much confined to supplying animals with fodder. Fodder is the word *chortos*, so that is where the verb *chortazo*, where the verb *chortazo*, comes from.

Now I've never raised livestock, but I think the general idea is feed the animals a lot. That's what I kind of observe is just a general principle. Feed them as abundantly as you can so you can fatten them up and make a good meal out of them later. The dairy cows, feed them as much as possible so they'll be fat, happy cows and then producing good milk. So with the grass and the grain God supplies, you just keep shoveling that fodder to them. Let them gorge it down. That's the origin of this verb *chortazo*, which had to do with supplying animals for fodder.

But in Classical Greek, you didn't really use this word of feeding human beings, not unless you wanted to insult them. This was an insult to point out maybe bad table manners. And people would speak of *chortazo* of a man eating and that meant you considered that guy brutish and unrefined, like he, he ate like a Viking or he ate like a pirate or a barbarian or something. You know, just schlopping it down, wiping his mouth with his arm and all that kind of stuff.

But after classical times, and especially when you get into New Testament Greek, the word is never used like that in the New Testament; never used as an insult. It does still imply eating to full satisfaction like an animal eats. But it really points to the abundant provision of God. It's like God is happy to shovel fodder into a hungry child. And that is how God supplies all of our need, fully and abundantly without concern for consuming too much. Keep on eating because the supply is just going to keep on coming. We picture this verb used in the New Testament when Jesus fed the five thousand.

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It says in Matthew 14:20, "They ate, they all ate," all, not just five thousand, that's men, women and children besides. It could be fifteen to twenty thousand people. "They all ate and they were satisfied." That's *chortazo*. Not only that, but they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces left over. Who's that for? There's twelve Apostles, right? They needed to eat. They were distributing food. Now they had their own basket. When Jesus fed the four thousand, it says in Matthew 15:33, "And they all ate and were satisfied." *Chortazo*, again. Then it says, "They took up seven baskets full of broken pieces left over." Seven, not twelve. This time Jesus wanted to teach them to share, or something like that. Parents feel free to use that with your kids.

Are you seeing the connection, though? God wants us to find our full satisfaction in him. So what does he do? After teaching all humanity by means of physical hunger, to continually, daily seek God, look to him, seek their deeper satisfaction in him. God has been teaching that lesson ever since the foundation of the world.

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Then God sent Jesus Christ. And Jesus comes, he uses supernatural power, doing miracles, not supernatural acts of judgment, prophetic judgment, but prophetic millennial blessing miracles. And one of the most astounding and instructive acts of miraculous power is when Jesus creates food, when he satisfies the hunger of thousands, tens of thousands of people. That is intentional and instructive for us.

To show you that I want to have you turn to first an Old Testament passage and then a New Testament passage. Go first to Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah 31. We're wrapping it up here, but Jeremiah 31. God wants us to see and look to Christ to satisfy our spiritual hunger and I want to show you that by starting with Jeremiah 31:11, 31:11.

It says there, "The Lord has ransomed Jacob, he has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more. Then shall the

young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the Lord."

Is that not this beatitude unpacked, here in the Old Testament, predating what Jesus said? As I said, Jesus is being very biblical when he preaches the Sermon on the Mount. In Luke 22:20, Jesus is eating with his Apostles. Again, rich with symbolism that he would be eating with them and he says to them, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." The new covenant, forgiveness of sins, law written on the heart, all saints knowing God, this is the entry point into all the restoration promises we just described here.

Look at it there in verse 31. "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I

was their husband, declares the Lord." But this! "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall each one teach his neighbor, teach his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

God sent Jesus Christ to fulfill that covenant, Luke 22, that in him, we would all be fully satisfied. Jesus himself said as much. Turn to John chapter 6, John 6. The scene here is immediately after Jesus fed the five thousand, and the people were fully satisfied, *chortazo*-ed. They were stuffed to the rafters with bread and fish. And mind you, that was bread that was never baked from dough that was never kneaded, from grain that was never grown in the thorny soil of a cursed earth. Jesus just created it new. The fish he miraculously provided that day. They never swam in cursed waters; they just, they were there. The gave it out. The thousands ate, they were fully satisfied, but believe me, they wanted more.

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Look at John 6:15, Jesus left them, "Perceiving they were about to come and take him by force to make him king." He went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. It wasn't his time yet. He was on a divine time schedule and upon his return to Capernaum, while he was teaching in the synagogue, the people caught up with him, in verse 25, and Jesus there exposes and confronts the fact that, they want, what they want from him is not him. They want his food.

Look what they say in verse 31, "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" That is, if you want us to stick around, Messiah, to keep believing in you, to be your followers, do what Moses did and become our manna-vending machine. It's not only profane; the deeper point is it's totally missing the point.

The larger, more significant reality of Jesus feeding them is this reality: God did not send Jesus to dispense satisfaction; God sent Jesus to be their satisfaction. Their interests were merely physical and temporal, which proves they were not numbered among the poor, the hungry, the weeping, the despised.

These people are not kingdom citizens, no matter what they profess. At the end of the chapter, they prove it by walking away.

Still, Jesus is gracious to teach them. Look at verse 32, John 6:32. "He says to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'" Again, they're after the bread. So he said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

Skip ahead to verse 48 "'I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'" The Jews

disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'

"So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.'"

We don't have time to unpack all that right now. We're , we're short on time, but if you want to be blessed, go online sometime this week, and listen to Ligon Duncan's sermon from last year's Shepherds' Conference. It's called simply, "The Bread of Life." Excellent message on this text. But the simple point we need to see for today is this, that Jesus Christ is the bread from

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heaven. And if you eat of him, not what he has to give you, but if you eat of him, you'll live forever. All your longings will be satisfied. He is the one that God sent to satisfy us fully. And those who are truly hungry in this deeper spiritual sense will look to him to find all their satisfaction and contentment.

Beloved, that's why we come here, week after week after week, to partake of the preached Word together, the regular means of the grace of Jesus Christ. He feeds us weekly, and he feeds us several times on the Lord's Day and during the week as well. And those who truly hunger, they feed off that preached Word, the Word explained and then applied. And there are those in every church I've ministered in and every church I have actually attended they seem to be satisfied by only one feeding per week, and the shorter the better.

In fact, they prefer just occasional feedings, just a short snack every couple of weeks; extends to times, those times of a month between feedings, sometimes longer. Do you know what that tells me as a pastor? It tells me they are feeding somewhere else, but they're not eating true food or drinking true drink.

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They have found a cheap substitute and the world has offered them at a cheap price. And rather than actually feeding, do you know what they're doing? They're starving. And the physiology of starvation has kicked in, in their spiritual lives. So I am deeply concerned for people like that because if they do not return to the table Christ sets for them each and every Sunday and during the week as well, I start to wonder if they ever belonged to the table at all.

I found another pastor who wrote about the same things. J. Dwight Pentecost shares my concern to see the sheep continuing to eat well. He wrote this, "No situation concerns the pastor's heart as much as to trace the progress of spiritual retrogression; retrogression in a man's life." He's talking about those who drift away, digress spiritually, falling into a state of spiritual lethargy and then starvation.

He continues, "I can think of those who came to know Jesus Christ as a personal Savior through the ministry of the Word, who evidenced the genuineness of their salvation by what seemed to be an insatiable hunger for the Word of God. Desire to feed

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on this living bread brought them to all the services faithfully and expectantly. They asked the pastor for his recommendation of books they could study. Frequently, the pastor's phone would ring early in the morning or late at night, and those who met something in the word they did not understand would call so that he might share the truth with them. They gave every evidence of growing in the things of the Lord. And then the phone calls would stop. The prayer meeting would fall by the way. Oh, they were there Sunday morning and evening, but the edge was gone from their appetites.

"Soon they receive all they needed in one service a week. And then, they're satisfied by an occasional visit. They have appetites that need to be satisfied, but they're not being satisfied by the Word. They open their ears and eyes to what is not food and let it pour into their lives. They give themselves to what can never satisfy. They bury themselves in business activity and leave the word of God and Jesus Christ out. Spiritual retrogression sets in. Loss of spiritual appetite is a symptom of the most serious situation a child of God can face."

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Listen friend, if that's you, take time today to reacquaint yourself with the pangs of hunger, spiritual hunger. If you know someone like that, in that condition, plead with them to examine themselves; see whether they're in the faith, to go back to the Gospel, remember from where they have fallen. May God awaken their hunger. We want to see those who are starving, who recognize their hunger, they, we want them to, to learn that, to see it, to identify it, and to be nursed back to health, return to Christ's table to partake of his spiritual food.

That is why we come regularly to the Lord's table. Communion table here is a regular reminder that our satisfaction is in Christ. It is not a coincidence that we celebrate the Lord's table here by consuming food and drink. I know it's not enough to satisfy anyone's real hunger or thirst, but it's enough to remind us that we are hungry and that he is the bread of life and that his flesh is true food, his blood is true drink.

When we come to him at this table, he meets us here to minister to us his life-giving Word. "Blessed are you who are hungry now," for in Christ and in Christ alone, "you shall be

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satisfied." Hunger's a reality. Physical hunger teaches us about the deeper spiritual hunger only God can satisfy, and he sent Jesus Christ to satisfy that hunger. It's a growing reality for us now, but it is one day going to be consummated fully when he comes in his kingdom. Amen!