**Beatitudes 4  
Hungry and blessed**

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Matthew 5:1-12, Luke 6:20-26

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (Matthew 5:6)

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We are trying to learn these sayings together:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

When Jesus was twelve years old, the gospel of Luke tells us, he went off to study with the scholars of the Scriptures, much to his parents’ surprise, who thought he was in the company of people who were returning home after Passover. It took his parents three days to find him, sitting respectfully, listening to the teachers, asking questions. He was surprised at their surprise, asking if they didn’t know he was going to be found in his Father’s business.

Later, when he was an adult, John tells us of another interaction with another scholar, who comes to him by night, and not at the temple. This man, Nicodemus, is probably afraid for his reputation among the other leaders.

He starts by praising Jesus for the signs he’s done – how could it be otherwise but that Jesus is come from God.

* You know, Nicodemus, says Jesus, unless you are born from above, born anew, born again, you will not see God’s kingdom.
* But how can an old man be born again? What, do you think it can enter his mother’s womb again?
* Listen: if you are not born of both the flesh, and the Spirit, you will not see the kingdom of God. The wind blows where the wind decides to blow; so does the Spirit.
* How can this be?
* Are you a teacher of Israel, and you don’t know?

Do you sense some frustration in Jesus? How different it seems than when he was twelve, when it seemed natural to go to the teachers for wisdom. He now knows these men can ask silly questions, miss the point, and be so afraid of seeming wrong that even the best of them comes to him by night.

How different from another story, one that John tells also, of a woman he meets at a well, in the heat of the day, after a long march. He’s alone, his disciples went off to buy some food in the village, and he is both hungry and thirsty. He asks her for water, and starts this conversation with someone who in many ways the opposite of a teacher of Israel: a woman, a Samaritan, a person who was living out of wedlock with a man after having had five husbands. To her, he reveals that he is the Messiah of Israel, and the Spirit blows, and she believes.

Back come his disciples, carrying the food, surprised to see him talking to her. After she leaves to tell her village mates about who she met – thoughtfully leaving the water jar for Jesus and the disciples – his disciples offer him something to eat. We know that Jesus enjoyed eating; he was criticized for this. But this time he says,

* No, I’m already full. I have had food to eat that you don’t know about.
* Did someone bring him food?
* My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to accomplish his work.

Jesus is so satisfied with his interaction with this woman that it even takes his hunger away. This woman, who most of his peers and betters would have said was so far away from the will of God, asked the right questions, and responded in gratitude and faith to the gift he gave her of himself.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled”. This is Jesus’s fourth blessing.

I find it so interesting that Jesus says that righteousness is something one can feel almost a physical hunger and thirst for. “Almost,” but as we saw in his interaction with the woman at the well, sometimes an actual hunger and thirst. He was so intent on his interaction with the woman, so hungry and thirsty to see the Spirit work in her, to see the kingdom of God come to her, that he forgot his physical hunger and thirst. And when she did respond to the Spirit, when she entered God’s kingdom, it was food and drink enough for him.

Righteousness. Goodness. The Good. Hungering and thirsting for the Good. Do you remember that the early Christians called Jesus “the Righteous” or “the Righteous One”? I think they had in mind that Jesus was the Sinless One, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. But I think they also saw in him the perfect good. We are called to live a life like Jesus’s; when we want to do what righteousness looks like, what goodness looks like, we can look at Jesus for our example.

And the promise to those who hunger and thirst for goodness, for the good, for Jesus: “they will be filled.”

There *will* be moments when, like Jesus, we are so satisfied with what God is doing through us, that we will be physically affected like he was and not even want to eat.

There *will* be moments when we will be caught up in the joy of things, and be satisfied.

As you can see from my body, I have hungered and thirsted for physical food, and the capitalist system we live in has been more than ready to feed me all the Happy Meals and Satisfaction Snacks I could afford. Apparently, I’ve been able to afford a lot. And so this beatitude, especially in the Lukan version, is challenging:

Blessed are you who are hungry now,

for you will be filled.

Woe to you who are full now,

for you will be hungry.

But I have also experienced that satisfaction, that fullness that Jesus speaks of.

Now we will turn to another feast; a spiritual meal that Jesus provides us: a communion in bread and wine, which reminds us of his sacrifice for us, of the fellowship we have with one another and with God, and the hope we have for spending a very long time with the Righteous One and the saints of God.

My prayer for you is that you will sense God’s Spirit calling you to a life of full satisfaction in this meal. I also ask you to pray, as Jesus did after talking to the woman at the well, for more people to see the fields ripe for harvest, for the feast of goodness to be shared with many.