

## THE GOSPEL IN PRINCIPLE 3 AND PRINCIPLE 4

We're going to talk about the 4<sup>th</sup> beatitude tonight; "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." I intend to teach through these beatitudes in the order they appear in Scripture, because there is a clear progression that is evident. But note that it's a bit different than the beatitudes that Celebrate Recovery uses for each principle.

Here's a brief description of the progression, and how it describes recovery, or transformation, or sanctification – all words that point to the growth of the Christian.

In the first three beatitudes, we look at ourselves. We discover, that in our sin, we have bankrupted ourselves spiritually – we are poor in spirit. We see God as holy and righteous, and we begin to see that we have no standing before him without Jesus Christ.

In the second beatitude, we mourn over what our choices have done to us, and to our Savior. And when we are grieved not only for ourselves but for the choices that helped to crucify Christ ("It was my sin that held him there"), we also see a spark of hope that this Christ is risen and may be yet able to save us.

But for that to happen, we have to humble ourselves before Christ. We become meek; willing to submit our wills and lives to the care and control of the Savior who loved us even when we were his enemies.

This is who we are: poor in spirit, mourning over our sin, and ready to become meek as we choose to obey the call of Christ on our lives.

Now, as we come to the 4<sup>th</sup> beatitude, an important shift occurs. We think less of ourselves, and begin to think more of Jesus, and more about his righteousness. We have to see ourselves clearly – that we are all desperate sinners in need of a Savior. And now, then, we begin to hunger and thirst after our Savior. We don't just want Jesus – we are starving for Jesus, and his righteousness.

As we now commit to pursuing the righteousness of Christ, we will then see the fruit of the following beatitudes – we will grow in mercy; we will grow in our ability to make peace; our hearts will become pure, more and more devoted to Christ.

But it starts with a hunger for Christ. And Jesus says, “Blessed are you who are hungry for my righteousness, because I promise you will be filled by it.”

If you are beginning to hunger and thirst after righteousness (which means Christ – he is our righteousness), that's good news, because God creates that hunger in you. And it's good news because if you are hungering and thirsty after Christ, God will satisfy that hunger. **God creates the hunger; God satisfies the hunger.** That is the good news in this beatitude.

#### God Creates the Hunger

This is good news, because you cannot muster up a hunger and thirst for righteousness on your own. You and I are here tonight because we have hungered and thirsted after anything but Jesus. Oh, we knew Jesus perhaps, and would claim him to be our Lord and Savior, but we had appetites for a variety of other things – pleasure, sex, power, control, money, security, love. Thank God that He creates a hunger for righteousness, because we cannot muster it up on our own.

How does He create this hunger and thirst in us?

1. He gives you new life. A corpse has no appetite; a dead man cannot be hungry – right? And yet, you were dead in your trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). In our sin, we are like dead men walking.

**2** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Being alive in Christ means being able to even have an appetite or a thirst. Consider it good news when you come to the place where nothing or no one else satisfies you any longer, because it is the first sign of a developing appetite for the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

2. He turns up the heat. There is nothing like spending some time in the desert to build up a thirst. You may be complaining about being in the desert right now. You feel that nothing is going your way, and that God is absent and not really interested in showering you with his grace. But are you in Christ? Then you are a child of God, experiencing his mercy. Not in Christ? Then you are still an object of his wrath, but for the child of God, the desert is the place where you develop a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Consider that God did not spare his own Son. Remember that immediately after Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan river, and God is heard, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, “ Jesus is led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted. It is God’s mercy that he treats you like his only begotten Son, so that you may hunger and thirst for righteousness. Jesus walked by faith in the desert, and his faith was strong enough to withstand Satan. Your faith will grow in the desert as well, so that you will know what it means when Scripture says, “the righteous will live by faith.” The work you are called to do is to live by faith. This is why God is turning up the heat on you.

3. He publishes a “restaurant review.”

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is like pursuing the ultimate steak experience. Imagine that you receive \$300 from an anonymous benefactor (we’ll call this grace – an unmerited favor) with the only caveat being that you must spend it on the perfect steak dinner for you and your spouse. Where are you going to find it? You might start by checking out restaurant reviews. What has been written about the best steak dinners ever served?

God has published a “restaurant review” – it’s called the Bible. It is a story of just how good God is. It is a story of everlasting faithfulness; it is a story of love; it is a story of power; it is a story of miracles – and all the stories, or reviews, if you will, point to the greatness of the chef – God Himself.

But you’re not going to develop a taste for that steak until you know something about it. In the same way, you won’t develop a taste for righteousness, until you know something about it, and certainly knowing as much as you can about

Jesus is the way to start. He took on our sin, so that we might take on his righteousness. It is the Great Exchange – our sin for his righteousness. It is amazing, sacrificial, unmerited by us and it is the greatest demonstration of love and faithfulness ever recorded. Don't you want some of this?

4. He sends a smell of the feast.

OK – you're interested in the restaurant, but it's \$300 and you want to be sure, so you go for a walk to check it out. You pass by a McDonald's. It smells good – remember, you're hungry, and McDonald's **is** good. (It's not good for you, but I love McDonald's.) But then you walk by God's restaurant, and the aroma causes you to immediately drool (fortunately, you're alone at this point). You choose the restaurant. You walk by McDonald's and walk into the restaurant and make your reservation.

This is good news. You now hunger and thirst for righteousness. You used to settle for McDonald's. You could use the gift you've received to eat a hundred years at McDonald's, but that's not what the benefactor intended for you.

We have all settled for something that can never satisfy us like the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But you've made your reservation. You have made a commitment to pursue righteousness, and it is because God has created a hunger inside of you. Count it good news that you desire Christ more, and other things less. There will be competing aromas, but remember how good the reviews of righteousness are in God's word, and remember the aroma coming from his presence, and thank God for your hunger and thirst.

God Satisfies Your Hunger

You are blessed when you hunger and thirst, when you are starving for righteousness, because, as Jesus says, “you will be filled.” If God never satisfied your appetite for him, you would remain perpetually frustrated and definitely not blessed. But God creates your hunger for him, for the express purpose of satisfying your appetite. It gives him great joy to do this, just as it gives the great chef joy to prepare for you the steak dinner of a lifetime. His reputation grows, and more and more people develop a hunger for what he has to offer. Imagine this planet if the entire population actually developed a hunger and thirst for righteousness. That’s why he will satisfy your hunger, so that you will be blessed and so that the reputation of Jesus Christ will grow. So how does he do this?

1. He invites you in.

**55** “Come, everyone who thirsts,  
 come to the waters;  
 and he who has no money,  
 come, buy and eat!  
 Come, buy wine and milk  
 without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
 Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,  
 and delight yourselves in rich food.

God stands at the door to his restaurant, his temple, his church, and says, “Welcome. Put the \$300 away. There is no price for you to pay. My Son has already paid it for you. But I’m glad you are hungry for my righteousness, because you will delight in it.”

You’ve made the reservation; you’re committed to go after righteousness. You know you need it, but the blessing of being filled with

righteousness is more than Christ-like behavior. It is real contact with the living God. He is inviting you in so that you may be filled. The followers of Jesus Christ who heard this Sermon on the Mount were blessed to be in his presence – to be in the presence of righteousness. In the same way, we are all blessed when God invites us into His presence so that he may fill us with His righteousness.

2. He seats you with others hungering for righteousness.

This is where community comes in – the CR community; your church. We do not do recovery by ourselves. It is hard to pursue righteousness alone. We were created for relationships, and when you are in relationship with others who hunger and thirst for righteousness, your chances of being filled increase greatly.

I can tell you to read your Bible more, and pray more. This is standard spiritual discipline, but you still want McDonald's. We need someone to say to us, regularly, that we're crazy to stop at McDonald's when we can have this meal. "Remember that review we read? Remember how good this place smelled?" "Do you believe that God is faithful to you; that he cares about you? Do you trust that he is for you?" Get a sponsor! Get one who you know is hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

3. He serves you.

Jesus says, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus gave his life for you to free you to pursue righteousness. You are no longer a slave to sin – he has redeemed you. He paid the ransom for your freedom. You may still feel like a slave to sin, but if you are in

Christ, the theological truth is that you died to sin so that you might live to righteousness. You will fight sin your entire life, but that is what hungering and thirsting after righteousness means. You pursue righteousness as you run from sin. Jesus has freed you to do this.

And even now he gives you his Spirit to strengthen you. Jesus is the Bread of life. He nourishes you by his Spirit. Remember this the next time you take communion. Remember that the little wafer and plastic cup of grape juice consist of the greatest feast you could ever have – it is the feast of righteousness, because it is the Bread of life. It is the life of Jesus refreshing you, filling you and energizing you for the pursuit of righteousness.

#### 4. He dines with you.

The great chef comes out and dines with you. His presence makes this dining experience more than you could have hoped for. You came looking for the best steak ever. You found it, but you never expected to have a personal experience with the chef himself – he invites you in; he arranges the seating so that you have great community; and now he dines with you.

The story is told in 2 Kings 9 of David and Mephibosheth. David has finally won his battle with King Saul and has established his kingdom, as God ordained. Normally, any conquering king would be sure to execute the entire family of his enemy, to prevent any chance of a future rebellion. And Mephibosheth was the last remaining relative of Saul. He was in hiding, unable to fight, as he had been crippled since birth.

But Mephibosheth was also the son of Jonathan, David's best friend, and David had pledged to Jonathan to show kindness to his family. So in 2 Kings 9, David finds out that Mephibosheth is still alive and summons for him.

Imagine that you're Mephibosheth. You deserve to die for being the enemy of the conquering king, but when he gets to David's palace, David informs him that he will now live with him and will dine at his table with him for the rest of his life. 2 Kings 9:11: So Mephibosheth ate at the king's table like one of the king's sons." Talk about blessing!

Your sin and my sin have qualified us as enemies of the king, and we deserve the fate of any enemy of a conquering king. But when we pursue righteousness, we dine at the table with the king, who in our analogy is the Great Chef. Can this meal be any better?

So what is your response tonight? Have you checked out the restaurant reviews, caught a whiff of the aroma and have made a decision to pursue righteousness? Excellent – the blessing is coming, even as it may already have come in part. Or, are you starving, but still feel like you're stuck in the desert, knowing you can't go back, but unsure of where this righteousness is. Remember that it is God's mercy that he is creating this hunger within you, and remember that he is faithful to fill you. Be grateful for the hunger, because the promise of Jesus Christ is that you will be filled.

Or, are you not even hungry yet? Check out your appetite. Are you still eating at McDonald's? Is that working for you? Be honest, but then remember that you can't hunger and thirst for righteousness until you have become poor in spirit,

grieved over your sin and humbled to the point of obedience. In other words, you haven't worked the steps yet.

God is always working to create a hunger in you for his righteousness. If you are unsure that this is true for you, it's because you're still hungry for something else. What is it?

There is blessing in this process of recovery. It's not easy, but nothing worth having is ever easy. Pursue righteousness. Thank God for turning up the heat to make you thirsty for him. And wait to be filled with the best meal ever.

## The Gospel in Principle 3 and Principle 4

### **God creates the hunger; God satisfies the hunger.**

#### **Matthew 5:6**

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

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- In the first three beatitudes, we look at ourselves.
- Now, as we come to the 4<sup>th</sup> beatitude, an important shift occurs. We think less of ourselves, and begin to think more of Jesus, and more about his righteousness. We have to see ourselves clearly – that we are all desperate sinners in need of a Savior. And now, then, we begin to hunger and thirst after our Savior. We don't just want Jesus – we are starving for Jesus, and his righteousness.
- But it starts with a hunger for Christ. And Jesus says, "Blessed are you who are hungry for my righteousness, because I promise you will be filled by it."
- And it's good news because if you are hungering and thirsty after Christ, God will satisfy that hunger. **God creates the hunger; God satisfies the hunger.**

That is the good news in this beatitude.

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  - Eph 2:1-5
2. He turns up the heat.
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  - Isaiah 55:1-2
  - God stands at the door to his restaurant, his temple, his church, and says, "Welcome. Put the \$300 away. There is no price for you to pay. My Son has already paid it for you. But I'm glad you are hungry for my righteousness, because you will delight in it."
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redeemed you. He paid the ransom for your freedom. You may still feel like a slave to sin, but if you are in Christ, the theological truth is that you died to sin so that you might live to righteousness.

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  - The story is told in 2 Kings 9 of David and Mephibosheth.
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