

Blessed Are the Hungry, Part 2

Luke 6:21

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 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, 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 on a cursed earth there would be many occasions in which the earth wouldn't produce all that man needed 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. But 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. And I've got biblical warrant to keep the vegans off my back, because Paul, Paul told Timothy, 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."

And a question is why? Why did God design us with a need for regular food, or a regular need for food, to hunger for food and then to satisfy our hunger by eating food? First, the daily need for food reminds us that we're dependent creatures. We're dependent. We're not self-sufficient as God is, aseity, 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 our provision. He is 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. 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 we all have, to know our God, to worship him and enjoy him 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 and 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.

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 the need to live up to the standards of righteousness 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.

But 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. 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 and 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 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 roughly 500 years, roughly, previous to this time, it was a word that was pretty much confined to supplying animals with fodder. Fodder is the word *chortos*, so that's where the verb *chortazo* comes from.



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 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 supplies the 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, that meant you considered that guy brutish and unrefined, like he ate like a Viking or he ate like a pirate or a barbarian or something. You know, just schlepping it down, wiping his face 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. It is 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.

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 ate and 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 were 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, that again, "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, 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.

Then God sent Jesus Christ. And Jesus comes, uses supernatural power, doing miracles, not supernatural acts of judgement, 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, 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. I want to show you that by showing you Jeremiah 31:11, 31:11.

It says there, "The Lord has ransomed Jacob and 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, and 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 then new covenant in my blood." That 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 there in verse 31. "Behold, 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! "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and 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 thrown 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 just there. And he gave them out. The thousands ate and they were fully satisfied, but believe me, they wanted more.

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 his own 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 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.' And 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 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, and 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.’”



The simple point we need to see for today is this, that Jesus Christ is the bread from 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've actually attended who seem to be satisfied by only one feeding per week, and the shorter the better.

In fact, they prefer just occasional feeding, just a short snack every couple of weeks. It 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. They have found a cheap substitute the world has offered them at a cheap price. And rather than actually feeding, you know what they're doing? They are actually 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." Retrogression in a man's life, he's talking about those who drift away, digress spiritually, falling into a state of spiritual lethargy and 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. A desire to feed 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 had met something in the word they did not understand would call so 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.”

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 to see whether they're in the faith, to go back to the Gospel, to remember from where they have fallen. May God awaken their hunger. We want to see those who are starving, who recognize their hunger, we want them 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. The 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

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!