

The Hungry and Thirsty

My shaking bed awakened me at 4:31 AM. The whole house was shaking. I was afraid. It was dark. I heard the noise of things crashing to the floor and my children calling out. My wife was now awake. Our bed was rocking back and forth. I reached to turn on the light by my bed. It blinked on and immediately went out. I told my children to go back to bed and stay there because we were in the middle of what became known as the Northridge Earthquake, near Los Angeles California. It was 17 January 1994. Thousands of people were concerned for their life. Water pipes were damaged and thousands had no water and those who did were cautioned not to drink it. The electricity was off and most could not cook. Food was spoiling because the refrigerators did not operate. The food markets were closed because floors were buried with food products and broken glass. Safety, hunger and thirst had new meaning to the earthquake victims. . .

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

THE PARADOX. Fear of danger, hunger and thirst were emotions Jesus' audience knew well. So Jesus' words, "Happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness . . ." had real meaning to his Jewish listeners for they understood poverty and they understood Roman brutality. History tells us that Herod the Great had reduced the vast majority of the Jewish population of Jesus' time to poverty level. It was common for groups of Jews to share their food, water and money to help others live. Most of the city was on charity or relief. It was mainly the poor who had an open heart to Jesus' message, for Luke 1:53 says,

He has filled the hungry with good things but . . . sent the rich away empty. Luke 1:53 (NIV)

What a lesson for us - Jesus loved the poor. Most of the Jews listening to Jesus on that hillside understood hunger and thirst. They knew real poverty - the kind where you are hungry and thirsty for a long, long time, the kind that makes you want to steal. Looking through Jesus' heart, Matt 9:36, helps us to understand that these people were poor and oppressed,

And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36 (NASB)

So Jesus used two Greek words they understood well. Two words that described intense hunger (*peinaw*) and thirst (*dipsao*). *peinaw* spoke of a passionate longing for food and it referred to long drawn out hunger. *dipsao* referred to thirst and sometimes painful thirst. Jesus went further and gave these two words the idea of non-stop hunger and thirst. Jesus is describing poverty - a strong, deep longing, never ending desire for food and water. Now Jesus was ready to meet their real need . . .

SEEKING SATISFACTION. My wife and I once rented a house owned by a man whose son knew a wealthy Christian whom we will call Leo. One day as I talked with the son, he said he was disappointed in Christianity. He explained that God had not made him wealthy like Leo after he became a Christian. He said he became a Christian in the hope of becoming rich! He was pursuing his own comfort or satisfaction.

Some of us may chuckle inside at this real life event, but

the Bible says we are just like him. All of us are laboring to meet needs and especially desires,

All a man's labor is for his mouth and yet the appetite is not satisfied. Ecclesiastes 6:7 (NKJV)

Scripture reminds us that many of us are not satisfied with just food. Money has become an all important pursuit.

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money . . . Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NKJV)

For others, work has become our god - our reason for living. We hunger and thirst for work. Listen to Ecclesiastes 4:8,

There was a certain man without . . . a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches and he never asked, "And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?" Ecclesiastes 4:8 (NASB)



Wine and physical pleasures (Ecclesiastes 2:1-3; 18), whether heterosexual or homosexual, have become a pursuit after satisfaction for others. Some of us seek satisfaction in personal honor, status, recognition and praise.

EMPTY CHRISTIANS. You see, we are like the poor who were listening to Jesus. We are all seeking something because we are not really satisfied. If we search our hearts, we will find an answer to the question, "What do I really want?" What are you seeking? In this beatitude, Jesus offers satisfaction. He is offering to meet YOUR real need . . .

Is it not interesting that Jesus promised Christians peace (John 14:27) and joy (John 15:11 and 17:13)? When Jesus

spoke to the woman at the well in John 4:13-14, He offered her living water,

Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. John 4:13-14 (NASB)

Then some days later Jesus told some of the Jews,

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:37 (NASB)

While Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit as the "rivers of living water" (John 7:39), Jesus says the rivers of living water will flow out of believers. We need to ask ourselves, "What kind of

living water flow am I experiencing in my life?" If you are a Christian, you will at least have living water dripping from your faucet but "Do you have a flood of living water gushing out from the inside?"

CONCLUSION. If you are not satisfied in your Christian life, maybe you have reworded Jesus' beatitude to read something like this, "Happy are those constantly, continually hungering and thirsting after satisfaction for they shall be satisfied." Jesus did say, "Happy are those who pursue satisfaction." Is your house shaking? Have your lights gone out and are you in constant need of food and water? Are you busy seeking food and water - seeking the basics and the wants of this world? Do you find the cycle endlessly repeating over again and again? We need to stop chasing satisfaction because Jesus said,

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you (NASB).” Matt. 6:33

Satisfaction comes in pursuing righteousness. If you are not a Christian you need to start by asking God for living water. If you are a Christian, Jesus says satisfaction comes

when you fix all of your heart on being as holy as Jesus. He wants you to be “constantly, continually hungry and thirsting - craving - longing like a poor man or woman to be holy as He is.

“YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY (NASB).” 1 Peter 1:16