

# NICK GUY & THE HUNGRY & THIRSTY AFFAIR

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**THEME:** Jesus, in Matthew 5:6, said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and what does it mean to be satisfied?

**NOTES:** The Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5-7, remains one of the most oft-quoted and oft-misinterpreted and misunderstood portions of Scripture. Jesus pronounced a blessing of satisfaction on those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. To appreciate what He said and what He meant, we must understand each portion of this verse.

**BLESSED:** We must begin by defining the word “Blessed.” “Blessed” is how we translate the Greek word *Makarios*. It means happy, fortunate and blissful.

There is something important to realize about applying this word. The kind of happiness, blissfulness or contentment Jesus is speaking of is the kind that cannot be found in external things. True blessedness, true happiness is within our hearts and is not affected by the circumstances of life. It is inward and not dependent on outward circumstances.

**HUNGERING & THIRSTING DEFINED:** It is a bit difficult for most of us to truly appreciate the idea of hungering and thirsting. Although we do know what it’s like to be hungry and thirsty, we have most likely never experienced either to the degree that Jesus surely means in this verse.

The words Jesus used in Matthew 5:6 when He spoke of hungering and thirsting righteousness is very important. In the Greek language, normally, verbs like hunger and thirst have objects that are in the partitive genitive. The partitive genitive is a case that indicates incompleteness, like partialness. The idea would indicate a hungering for *some* food, and a thirsting for *some* water, not for all the food and water in the entire world.

But, in Matthew 5:6, Jesus does not use the partitive genitive, but rather the accusative. This means that the hungering and thirsting He is speaking of is not just for *some* righteousness, but for all the righteousness there is.

**HUNGERING & THIRSTING FOR POWER:** Isaiah 14:13, 14 is speaking of Satan and his hunger and thirst for power. He desired to be equal with God.

It reads: “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will

set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.

Many desire to attain power; some could be said to hunger and thirst for it. But there is one interesting thing about earthly power: Many strive for it, but even for those who gain it, most of the time they discover that they are only able to hold on to it for a short time.

But even if one can attain it and possess it for their entire lives, that is a relatively short period of time when compared to eternity. Experience reveals to us the emptiness of power and the vanity of hungering and thirsting it.

Power, ultimate power, belongs to God and Him alone.

**RIGHTEOUSNESS DEFINED:** According to Jesus, true happiness does not come from power or praise but from desiring righteousness. Since this is true, it's important for us to know what righteousness is?

When Jesus spoke of righteousness in Matthew 5:6, He did not use the definite article. This would indicate that He was not speaking of just any righteousness, but *the* righteousness. That righteousness that comes from God. In fact, it would be that righteousness which God has in Himself. It is something more than just outward obedience.

Later in Chapter 5 of Matthew, Jesus makes some interesting statements. From verses 21 through 48 He teaches that unrighteousness is not merely a matter of what we do or say, but what we hold in our hearts. Righteousness is being pure in heart. We should hunger and thirst to have hearts that reflect God's heart.

**HUNGERING & THIRSTING FOR PRAISE:** Daniel 4 contains an interesting story about King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of his royal palace and praising himself for all he had accomplished. He said to himself, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"

Suddenly, God humbled him in a very dramatic way. While the words were still in the king's mouth, God caused him to go insane. For seven years he lived like an animal, outdoors, eating grass; his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws. When seven years were up, God restored his sanity, and Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that it is God, and He alone, who deserves praise.

Some people hunger and thirst for praise, and desire it above all else. Actually, we can all be guilty of this from time to time and in certain areas of our lives. This desire is like a constant hunger and thirst, and like a hunger and thirst for food and water, nothing else matters or satisfies like that longing to be filled. This kind of desire can devour a person.

First of all, praise is fleeting at best. What is praised in one generation may be totally forgotten in another. Then, of course, we may find ourselves desiring something that is not ours to receive.

Contrast the results of hungering and thirsting for praise or power with what Jesus said about hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Praise and power will never fully satisfy, but righteousness will.

**SATISFIED DEFINED:** So what did Jesus mean by us being satisfied?

The Greek word used in Matthew 5:6 was used often to describe the feeding of animals to the point where they wanted nothing more. They would be fed until they were completely satisfied. So, Jesus is saying that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be given total satisfaction.

That's a rather exciting prospect, but there is something else to consider. That very satisfaction drives us to want more. It is comparable to eating our favorite food. We may eat it until we can eat no more. Yet, our taste for that food continues, and, because it is so satisfying, our taste for it actually increases.

**HUNGERING & THIRSTING FOR PLEASURE:** Luke 12:16-21 contains the parable Jesus told about a rich man who had acquired much. He said to his soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Hungering and thirsting for material things to bring us pleasure is a shallow business. All of those things can be gone in a moment, or, as we saw in this parable, we can be gone in a moment. This isn't to say that it is wrong to have things or to take pleasure in them. But to make them the focus of our lives - to hunger and thirst for them - is to put our hope and joy in something that will not last.

**4 MARKS OF GODLY HUNGER AND THIRST:** Here are four things that will help us to gauge our hunger and thirst for righteousness.

First of all, do I have a dissatisfaction with myself? If I am satisfied with my own righteousness, I will see no need and have no overwhelming desire for God's.

Consider the Apostle Paul. With all of his accomplishments in the Kingdom of God, with all his knowledge and all of the zeal with which he labored, he still cried out in Romans 7:24 - "O wretched man that I am! Who can save me from the body of this death?"

The second test to measure our spiritual hunger and thirst is our lack of dependence upon things other than God's righteousness to satisfy us. To a truly hungry and thirsty man things like power, praise and pleasure would have little attraction to him.

If we are truly hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness, nothing but His righteousness will truly satisfy us.

The third test is to determine our desire, our craving, for the things of God. Just as a hungry and thirsty man desires food and drink above all else, so someone hungering and thirsting for righteousness will, above all else, desire God: His word, intimacy with Him and to walk with Him.

And, as we've discussed, feeding, as it were, on God's word only increases our appetite for it - for those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

A fourth test of our spiritual hunger and thirst is to examine to what degree we take delight in the things of God. Even, and perhaps especially, those that would be considered unpleasant.

When we are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, we understand that God uses *all* things for our good. Both things that are peaceful and things that are disruptive. Things that give us ease and those that give us hardship. We embrace the trials, understanding that God is working His plan and purpose through them.

**CONCLUSION:** Consider this from Psalm 42: "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."

In John 6:35, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

And in John 4:13, 14 in speaking to the woman at the well, He said, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Once we have tasted and are filled with God's righteousness, that satisfaction will cause us to desire more. And we will continue to have our hunger and thirst satisfied.

Then, finally there is Matthew 5:48 where Jesus said that we should be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect. God is the standard we are to strive for.

We may be ashamed to admit that we all fall far short of that many times. It is in fact impossible for any man, in his own strength, to accomplish. So, we may ask: Why would God demand something from us that we can't do? We can't do it in our own strength, but what God demands, He supplies the power to accomplish.

**RESOURCES:** John MacAurhtur's New Testament Commentary; R.C. Sproul's "Essential Truths of the Christian Faith."