

The Sermon on the Mount (Part 1)

The Good Life – A Fresh look at the Beatitudes

Study 4 – A Healthy Appetite

Introduction

The words *hungry* and *thirsty* are powerful metaphors, even for people like us who have in all likelihood never been truly desperate for something to eat or drink. (I am not of course speaking here about growing boys who seem to have hollow legs!!) For most of us, food and drink are easily obtainable and the challenge is not to over-indulge. But as we turn on the TV news, especially news from our continent, we are brought face to face with the reality of famine and the plight of thousands who are desperate for food and clean water. In the face of such need and desperation, the metaphors *hungry* and *thirsty* have a fresh impact upon us.

Of course there are things other than food and drink for which we can be and often are desperately hungry or thirsty. Those who are lonely hunger for love and companionship. Those who are driven thirst for success. Those who have, are often hungry for more only to discover that having more never seems to satisfy their appetite or their thirst. There are many things for which we hunger and thirst, but there are not many things that truly satisfy our deepest needs, a reminder to us that it is vital that we hunger and thirst for the right things.

Against this background of a hungry and thirsty world, Jesus' words in Matthew 5:6 are particularly striking. Jesus' words pronounce God's blessing on a desperate people, a people who are desperate for something rather surprising, given the appetites of our world. In this study we want to take a closer look at Jesus' words and their implications for us today.



Investigate and Think



Read Matthew 5:6

- What is surprising about Jesus' words in Matthew 5:6?

- What do you understand by the word 'righteousness'?
- What image does the phrase 'hunger and thirst for righteousness' convey?
- What do you think Jesus meant when he promised those who hunger and thirst for righteousness that they will be filled?

Righteousness is a key Bible word, nowhere more so than in the book of Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 59:1-21

- What language does Isaiah use in vss1-15 to describe Israel's plight and desperation in the exile?
- What did God do to put things right? (vs16-20)

Now Read Isaiah 9:1-7

- What will the Messiah's Kingdom be like?
- How will the LORD Almighty be involved in the establishment of this kingdom?

Read Isaiah 53:1-12

- The King of Isaiah 9 and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 are the same person. What role will the King's suffering have in establishing righteousness for God's people?
- What will this righteousness for God's people entail?

Read Matthew 5:6 again

- In the light of what you have learned from Isaiah, what do you understand Jesus to be saying in this Beatitude?

- When do you think Jesus' promise will be fulfilled? (try to find some NT verses to back up your answer)



Apply

- In what way have Jesus' words in Matthew 5:6 challenged or encouraged you?

- Would you consider yourself to be someone who hungers and thirsts for righteousness?

- If your answer above was 'No', what needs to change in your attitude and actions for this Beatitude to be true of you?

- If your answer above was 'Yes', what are the areas in which you need to grow in relation to this Beatitude?