**Sunday 9th October 2016 Message**

**Blessed are - those who are desperate to change their addictions**

***Scripture Matthew 5:1-10***

**Introduction**

The fourth beatitude is a turning point in the characteristics Jesus tells us we should pursue. We are moving from the root of our needs - poor in spirit, mourning our sins, meekness, to the life giving desires that flow when the roots of our need have been attended too.

In our fourth beatitude we find the trunk of the tree, the characteristic that brings life to the fruit of the final three beatitudes.

The backbone, the trunk, that determines our becoming like Jesus Christ, becoming godly, is righteousness. From this we will move to the fruits that will develop as a result of living a life of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Those fruits will be mercy, purity of heart, and peace.

**Slide -** ***Rom 14:17-18 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. NIV***

Being in the kingdom means being righteous. It is a foretaste, of being in the kingdom of heaven. Just imagine what it is like, and will be like when you get there, in heaven where there is no unrighteousness. Where everyone and everything is untainted by selfish desires which lead to deceit, coveting, theft, murder, hatred, bitterness, strife, malice, abuse etc.

Where everyone behaves like Jesus exampled whilst here on earth. Where everyone manifests the righteous nature of our heavenly dad. Wow what a different world that will be, and it is our privilege to begin manifesting this here and now as we reveal the kingdom of God. The effect of this is foretold in Isaiah

**Slide -** ***Isa 32:16-18 Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. NIV***

What an awesome thing it is then that we are made righteous because of the work of Jesus on the cross

**Slide -** ***2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. NIV***

He did this because there is no chance that we could make ourselves righteous, and so here in this beatitude Jesus calls us

**Slide -*Matt 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied . NIV***

The truth is having received Christs righteousness by faith we can be tempted to be satisfied with what He has done, and have little appetite for more righteousness. We get distracted by so many things that we feed our souls on, worldly pleasures, legitimate and illegitimate that we have lost appetite for the main thing. Dare I say we so often have become addicted to other things?

An addiction is simply an overindulged appetite. The world is creating so many things for us to become addicted too. Social media, technology, drugs, alcohol etc. Isn’t it incredible that people can change their appetite from the addiction of nicotine to the addiction of e-cigarette?

**What is Jesus asking us to do in this beatitude?**

The trunk of a tree should suck life from the roots, that reveal our dependency on God, to produce fruit and character like God.

There are three things Jesus calls us too in hungering and thirsting after righteousness that we shall look at

1. **Relentless pursuit**

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst. Not a vague interest, A passing glance. Hunger drives decisive action. That driving passion is a hallmark of the genuine believer.

Psalmist David – ***Psalm 63:1 my soul thirst for you***, Apostle Paul Phil 3 towards the end of his life – I want to know Christ (passion)

When Holy Spirit is in a person’s life thy are hungry for more.

Hunger – is a sign of need. The people who are blessed are those who know they need righteousness. This is what it feels like to be a Christian, you have not arrived, you have not achieved anything, you know you are hungry and thirsty for more. Pharisees think they have arrived and do not feel a need to change. If you are content to remain as you are you have lost the influence of the Spirit in you. You do not need to be taught how to be hungry as a baby.

Hunger is a sign of spiritual life.

The flesh hungers to sin, the spirit of a believer hungers for righteousness.

A healthy appetite is a sign of good health. If you have a longing to grow in Jesus Christ then you are spiritually healthy.

1. **Holy passion**

Hunger and thirst for what – righteousness.

Everyone is in search of a great satisfaction. Whatever you think will satisfy you that is what you will passionately pursue. Is it to be loved, appreciated, money, possession, to get revenge?

The only thing that will be completely **satisfied** in scripture, is righteousness.

Is this what Christians are truly pursuing? Look in a Christian bookstore you will see books to help you satisfy a happy married life, a great relationship, successful ministry, answered prayers.

We all want to be blessed, don’t we? We are not righteous if we hunger and thirst to be blessed. We have got it the wrong way round.

There are many answers you can give to the question as to why Jesus died. Forgivness, ticket to heaven.

1. 2 Corinthians 5:15 Christ died for all – that those who live may live for Him
2. 1 Peter 2:24 He Himself bore our sins on the tree – why – that we might die to sin and live for righteousness
3. 2 Corinthians 5:21 –He became sin – why - so that we might become righteous

His Passion was for us to have a passion for righteousness. Is my hunger and thirst growing or receding?

1. **Strange Paradox**

Hunger and thirst – satisfied – at the same time. When you have eaten the food takes away the hunger because you are satisfied.

Jesus talks about these occurring at the same time.

The more we experience of God the more you will hunger for more. **A W Tozer “The Pursuit of God” To have found God and still pursue Him is the souls paradox of love.**

**So how do we develop our hunger and thirst?**

We need to develop an appetite for righteousness, which will undoubtedly mean changing our diet, and/or abandoning any addictions.

Note Jesus says - ***Blessed are they who hunger after righteous*** – this is not the same as blessed are the righteous otherwise we would be left excluded from this blessing.

Not even the relaization of the desire, but the fact that the desire is in you is evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in you.

**What does being righteous mean to you?**

Being righteous has different demands on us according to the ethical questions that apply to each person are different according to where you work, live and serve.

What is the difference between receiving from the worlds systems and abusing the systems, whether that be in benefits or in work. In both systems of work and be supported by the state you have ethical questions to face. When claiming benefits you may hide/spend/or not declare savings and assets in order to receive the maximum. In work you may feel you employer owes you more so you over claim expenses, take home the odd pen, paper etc.

What are the boundaries between legitimate competition and destructive aggression? Where is the line between using the systems accessible to you, or manipulating them for your personal gain? Whatever area of life you find yourself in, you need to restrain yourself from exploiting others, and dare I say even trying to exploit God’s grace and mercy by ignoring His guidelines for a blessed life?

**What is the consequence of not being righteous?**

Your righteous behaviour, is meant to be the salt and light, that changes the world, and preserves it from decay. Whenever, we as believers act unrighteously we unconsciously/ consciously add to the decay in this world and give the enemy permission to point his finger at us in the mind of others and say “It’s all right”

Without righteousness, which is rare in the heart of mankind, the worlds systems in business and government, create regulations to try and control exploitation. We are being buried in red tape, not because some people have nothing better to do sitting in ivory towers, but because in every area of life people are unrighteous. You can look at 26911 words that describe a cabbage created by the EU, and think this is stupid beauracy, or you can say are there really 26911 different ways to produce a cabbage that exploits the consumer.

You think the EU is ridiculous then look at any chain of food outlets, and you will see as many words on how to prepare a burger, or breakfast, with pictures attached so that the customer always gets exactly the same, and the people preparing the meals do not con the company or customer out of one penny of the profit margin so meticulously computed.

Every law, and come to that every contract, that was ever made has more loopholes in it that you can imagine, and human ingenuity always manages to find them.

Here is the problem, as stated by Jesus, that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Therefore, we should not be surprised or caught unaware that sinners will sin, they will be unrighteous.

So what hope is there for righteousness in the places you work, trade, and the systems that affect your life? Only one, that some people will actually want it, and it starts with you. That they hunger for it, choose it not because of regulation. What would your world look like if at every level there were people who hungered for righteousness. Living to honour God rather than for personal gain.

**Hunger is natural, but appetite can be cultivated.**

You can learn to like and enjoy things that you once did not like. You can develop your appetite. Linda – resist the change of diet because she liked the food she ate – but change however reluctantly her health is better and she enjoys the different food she eats. She has cultivated, developed her appetite for something different. Eventually she began to like the food she now eats.

Jesus uses the analogy of hunger and thirst, to get the picture into our minds.

People move churches and find different churches have slightly different diets. Some are strong in the word, some their diet is strong in music and worship, others their diet is strong on fun. People who move to a different church for legitimate reasons either stay because the diet is similar to their previous church. Or stay because they accept that God has them in a season of change and adjust their appetite. Or leave because they are addicted to one style of church. Your appetite will come from the diet you choose.

Feed a congregation with a diet of entertainment, and they will have an insatiable appetite for entertainment, and woe betide you if you change the way your lead your service.

**Regular diet cultivates appetite over time.**

You will want more of whatever your feed yourself. So you have to be careful what you feed yourself.

Just think about the current fads to be absorbed on mobile technology, social media, games etc. the more the diet has been fed with newer technology then the appetite has grown. Overindulged appetiites have become an addiction. All of these things are legitimate pleasures in control, but they could be taking your time away from what God wants you to be and be doing.

**Five strategies for developing a godly appetite**

1. Gain momentum from the first three beatitudes Matthew 5:3-6

The beatitudes are a progression, you need to go through the first three steps. If you know the righteousness of God you will hunger.

1. Practice fasting from legitimate pleasures Mark 8:34 If anyone would come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Grazing between meals ruins your appetite. You work up an appetite by exercise and not eating.

Legitimate pleasures at the wrong time and in the wrong amount will spoil your appetite for holiness. They will dull your spiritual hunger and thirst.

How can I put the legitimate pleasures in the right place – periodic fasting – to stop legitimate pleasures controlling you. TV. Computer. Golf. Shopping.

Fasting is a means of cleansing out the body, fasting legitimate pleasures cleanses your soul. Why wait for lent?

Your hunger and thirst for righteousness will be stifled by excesses in any other area of your life.

When did you last fast a legitimate pleasure?

1. Make yourself vulnerable to the needs of others. 1 Tim 4:7 train yourself for godliness

Exercise the gift of mercy (it’s like running). Extend yourself in serving others. Reach out to the needs of those who have great needs.

Jesus extended Himself, leaving the comforts of heaven, makes Himself vulnerable, and serves the desperate needs of people around Himself. If you are comfortable being fed all the time in church, your appetite will become dull and insensitive to your mission to serve.

Jesus met people where they were, in the need they were in, so should we. Get to know people. When you enter their world and see how unrighteousness has impacted them, your hunger for righteousness will grow.

Well done those who serve the elderly, the hungry, the lonely, and those vulnerable on the streets. These are not just good works for the benefit of others and to the glory of God, they should be increasing your hunger and thirst for righteousness in yourself and in this world.

Take the time your gain from your fast and put it into something that will deepen your hunger.

1. Use your troubles and blessings as an incentive to feed on Christ. John 6:58 This is the bread that came down from heaven- whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.

Sauce and spices add something to your food, particularly bland food. Flavourings are essential to make you drool.

Sweet sauce of our blessings. The spice of troubles. The chilli of persecutions.

When the worst comes we remember God is at our right hand, this is the sauce that flavours are feeding on Christ.

1. Trust Christ – especially in relation to your sanctification 1 Thess 5:23-24

Your faith may only go as far as forgiveness, entry into heaven, but do you have faith/trust in God to change your life.

Jesus came to save us from our sins, not just guilt about them, not just from the consequence of our sins, but to save you from your sins.

He came so that you could be righteous.

You need to work with Him in developing an appetite to hunger for righteous. Take HOPE the promise is that you will be satisfied. You can change, He has ordained it, made it possible.

Isa 33:14-17

14 The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil — this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar. NIV

Ps 112:4-5

Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man. 5 Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice.

NIV

Prov 29:7

The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.

NIV

Isaiah 58:6-14

Isaiah 62:1-3

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet,

till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.

The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

NIV

Matt 5:20

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

NIV

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Holy and upright living, in accordance with God's standard. The word righteousness comes from a root word that means "straightness." It refers to a state that conforms to an authoritative standard. Righteousness is a moral concept. God's character is the definition and source of all righteousness (Gen 18:25; Deut 32:4; Rom 9:14). Therefore, man's righteousness is defined in terms of God's.

In the Old Testament the term righteousness is used to define man's relationship with God (Ps 50:6; Jer 9:24) and with other people (Jer 22:3). In the context of relationships, righteous action is action that promotes the peace and well-being of human beings in their relationships to one another.

For example, Adam and Eve would have acted righteously in their relationship with God if they had obeyed Him, because His commands defined that relationship. The Ten Commandments and related laws defined Israel's relationship with God. To obey those laws was to act righteously, because such obedience maintained the covenant relationship between God and His people.

The sacrificial system in the Old Testament and the cross of Jesus in the New Testament show man's need for righteousness. Sin is disobedience to the terms that define man's relationship with God and with other people. Since the FALL in the Garden of Eden, man is inherently unrighteous. As the prophet Isaiah said, "We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isa 64:6). Man cannot be righteous in the sight of God on his own merits. Therefore, man must have God's righteousness imputed, or transferred, to him.

The cross of Jesus is a public demonstration of God's righteousness. God accounts or transfers the righteousness of Christ to those who trust in Him (Rom 4:3-22; Gal 3:6; Phil 3:9). We do not become righteous because of our inherent goodness; God sees us as righteous because of our identification by faith with His Son.

(from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)