

Sermon Title: Cultivate Your Appetite
Scripture Text: Matt. 5:6 (Sermon on the Mount #5)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-5-20

Come with me, please, to Matthew Chapter 5; we are all the way up to Verse 6, and we're intentionally taking all the time we need to look very carefully at these so-called "Beatitudes"—or, "blessings"—that begin this great Sermon on the Mount; and today, we come to the fourth one.

I'd like you to think back to the longest you have ever gone without food, maybe without being ill; or the strongest thirst that you can remember. As we go through Verse 6 today, and look at this Beatitude, go ahead and feel your stomach knotted up with hunger, and feel your mouth parched to where you can't even speak clearly. Jesus uses the words "hunger" and "thirst" as powerful metaphors for the desire that He blesses here in the fourth Beatitude.

This fourth Beatitude is regarded as the final of the first package. The first four Beatitudes deal with attitudes toward God which He promises to bless. You can see how the four fit together: When you stand before God, you have to recognize that you are beggarly "poor" (Matt. 5:3)—utterly poor, reduced to hopelessness apart from mercy, when it comes to your ability to have a relationship with God. When you look upon God in His glory, and you see yourself in light of your own sinfulness, the natural thing to do is that you "mourn" (vs. 4) over your sin—it grieves you to see yourself for what you really are, so far removed from the holiness of God. Then, as you come to understand God's grace, and you understand that He and His grace are the *only* hope of your salvation—as your sin produces that mourning, it makes you "meek" (vs. 5), it makes gentle before God and any other people that might see you. The only way to offend a truly meek person who is mourning over sin and is recognizing beggarly poorness in regard to spiritual things—the only way to offend a person like that is to offend God, because God is the focus (see Ps. 69:9; 139:19-22; cf. 15:4).

The next logical description of the one who is blessed comes in terms of this new desire that God kindles from within those whom He adopts into His own family; it's a desire for righteousness (see Deut. 30:6; 1 Kings 8:58; Ps. 119:97; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:27; Rom. 7:22; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11; Heb. 13:21).

The next time we come back to Matthew 5, when we get to the fifth Beatitude, we're going to see a change. These first four are our response toward God; and after this, we're going to begin to see the results of being saved, in terms of how redeemed people treat others, and respond to others in the world.

Well, let's move on to this one for today. Our outline for each of the Beatitudes isn't broken, so we're not going to fix it—we'll just stay with it. The same two questions: Who is Blessed? and, What Does the Blessing Include? It's not a difficult passage: Matthew Chapter 5, Verse 6—"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted). "Blessed"—it's the same word in each Beatitude; it describes something that is inherent in God Himself. No one can be blessed, in the sense of what these Beatitudes describe, apart from God; only in a personal relationship responding to Him is this blessedness possible.

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Remember, we've said this: the Beatitudes are, all at once, the evidence of salvation—this is how you can recognize a saved person; they are the goals of discipleship—we *should* pursue the kinds of things that God says are blessed, we should be cultivating this. But let me show you a connection you may have never made. You all know how the end of the Gospel of Matthew is worded. If we go to Matthew 28, Verses 18 through 20—this is before Jesus ascends to the Father—we're told this: "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to'—listen to this now—"observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age' "

He laid out the plan, didn't He? "I have the authority, and I'm telling you what you should do! Go, therefore"—and actually it's a participle: "while you are going, *wherever* you're going—whether you're intentionally going to spread the gospel, or God is taking you someplace in His providence—in *every place* you go, your purpose is to "make disciples of all the nations." This is *no longer* just a Jewish party, folks—this is for *all* the "nations" (Is. 49:6)! This is God's will for every person who knows the Lord to spread the "word" about Jesus "Christ" (Rom. 10:17; cf. Acts 8:4; 2 Cor. 5:20; Rev. 14:6), "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"—but look at this: "teaching them to observe *all* that I commanded you." (see Rom. 1:5; 16:26) How long do we do that? Well, you can do it right up to "the end of the age"—this is your commission.

Now, here's the connection you may have never seen: the Sermon on the Mount is the largest collection of the teachings of Jesus that we have in any one place in the Gospels. This is a *big* part of "all that I commanded you." The Sermon on the Mount—*every single word* is for *everyone* in *all* the nations, to the end of this age (see Matt. 7:24-27). And, by the way: the Beatitudes are the *foundation* upon which all of this teaching rests.

So Jesus says: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." This is a combination of words that could not more vividly describe a craving, an *intense* yearning. When you absolutely feel like you're *starving*, and you're so thirsty you can't stand it, you don't care about anything else! That becomes the most important thing to you, so this is a great choice of words. In everyday life, those are the *strongest* of impulses!

After seeing the first few Beatitudes, it shouldn't surprise you that when Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst," He put "hunger" and "thirst"—those two verbs—into a form that implies something that goes on and on; these Beatitudes describe ongoing desires, conditions—cries of the heart, if you will. The more you desire the things of God, the more God delights to "fulfill" your "desire" (2 Thess. 1:11; cf. Jas. 4:8).

Look at Psalm 107, Verses 8 and 9. Jesus didn't just pull these things out of a hat; He was building on what the Word of God already said. Psalm 107:8 and 9—"Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men! For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good." If that section—especially the last line there—kind of sounds vaguely familiar to you, it may be because you've read the New Testament. The last part of that verse is quoted by Mary,

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the mother of Jesus, when she praises God for His goodness in her famous little speech in Luke Chapter 1, called "The Magnificat." She said: "He has filled the hungry with good things" (vs. 53). Jesus blesses that. God the Father blesses that.

It's both a matter of desire—that you desire righteousness—and it's also a duty (see Phil. 2:12-13; cf. Ps. 119:36 with 119:112; Jer. 24:7 with Hos. 6:3; Heb. 12:1 with 13:21). It's both a privilege and a practice (Ezek. 36:27). It's both a call and a habit to develop (Rev. 17:14; cf. Gal. 1:15; Eph. 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Pet. 2:9).

But notice: it's not just hungering and thirsting *by themselves* that's the source of blessing. It's not that it's more spiritual for you to live on the edge of starvation—that's not the point. It's hungering and thirsting *after* a specific object: *righteousness*. Do you *really* want to see righteousness exclude from your life and be practiced in the world in every bit of your sphere of influence? (see Ps. 40:8; 119:5, 20, 35-36, 133, 167)

Now, understand: Jesus is *not* teaching that *the way to* salvation is hungering and thirsting after it—wanting it really, really bad. You can't achieve righteousness on your own (see Prov. 20:9; Jer. 13:23; Gal. 2:16; 3:21). You can't achieve the righteousness you need (Ezek. 18:4; Matt. 5:48), which is the "righteousness" that "surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20)—the "righteousness" which isn't your "own," but is a gift "from God" (Phil. 3:9; cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). If Jesus *is* saying that you can achieve righteousness—in the sense of being saved from your sin—by just hungering and thirsting after it, then He's contradicting *Himself*, and a whole bunch of the rest of the Bible.

What He's talking about is an intense desire for the practical, visible kind of righteousness which can be seen in your life every day (1 Jn. 2:6). It refers to the integrity and the purity of "desire" (Prov. 11:23). It refers to the actions that Jesus wants you to develop (Prov. 11:20; 15:9). He wants you to develop righteous thinking—thinking in terms of what is upright (Prov. 12:5). He wants you to have correct, righteous evaluation of situations (Jn. 7:24). And He wants you to commit acts of righteousness (Titus 3:8)—doing the *right thing*, even if it's unpopular, even if it's unseen—but doing the right thing at every opportunity (Ps. 106:3). This righteousness is a matter of you and me, as adopted children of God, demonstrating how the Lord of Righteousness would act (Eph. 5:1). It shows that you want to be more like your Savior (Rom. 13:14). You want to demonstrate who God is (Phil. 2:15). He is the One who is both "just and the justifier" (Rom. 3:26)—"just" is the same word as "righteous"—He "is righteous" (Ps. 11:7), *and* He is the One who *makes* righteous (Rom. 4:5). So *of course* we should "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (see Ps. 1:2; 112:1; 119:129)

As a matter of fact, look how the Apostle Paul prayed for friends in Christ: In Philippians Chapter 1, Verses 9 through 11, he says: "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent"—you can read into that: you would want to be approving what is righteous as well—"in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

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In conjunction with one of our hymns this morning, we read James 3:18—"The seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." Oh, my goodness! We have a Beatitude coming up: "Blessed are the peacemakers"—who burn down buildings and tear down statues...Wait a minute, that's not quite how you make peace, is it?

We want to practice righteous. We need to be hungering and thirsting for it. That's something that godly people should be doing *now*, in Christ, *and*—by the way—this wasn't new! Godly people have *always* known and cultivated this kind of attitude. Psalm 42, Verses 1 and 2—"As the deer pants for the water brooks"—when you see an animal panting, what's going on? They're *thirsty*! "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"

Or, skip over to Psalm 63, Verses 1 through 4—"O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You"—thirsting and hungering—"in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name." Your hands are symbolic of what you *do*. "*Everything* I do, I want to glorify Your name." Isn't it cool that King David took so many of our worship songs and set Scripture to them? That's a *good* way to learn this stuff, to remember, to cultivate the appetite for these things (see Ps. 119:38; cf. Jos. 1:8).

Well, that's Who is Blessed? Now let's look at the promise that accompanies hungering and thirsting for the righteousness that God wants to show through your life. Who is Blessed? Those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness." What Does the Blessing Include? Look at the last half of Verse 6—"for they shall be satisfied." This is a brilliant word picture: Hungering and thirsting, and being satisfied.

You have your favorite foods, right? This is Independence Day weekend—I mean, to show you're an American these days, the best thing you can do on July 4th is cook your best food and eat it until you can't squeeze any more in, right? Well, that's not a terrible thing; that's feasting. But here's the interesting thing: You can eat your favorite foods until you can't take another bite, and it's *satisfying*—you *enjoy* it! There's a reason why somebody invented the term "comfort food." It is a joyful thing. Epicureanism, if that's your whole life—not so good. But it's part of joyfully taking part in what God has provided for us in His wonderful grace (1 Tim. 6:17).

But isn't it interesting: It's what satisfies you that makes you want that *even more*. Next time you have a chance to have a feast, you still want to pick your favorite, right? We want to eat more and more of those things *because* they are so satisfying. So the person who, as a habit, hungers and thirsts after God's righteousness, gets satisfied by *learning* of God's righteousness, which continues the cycle of the hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness—and you just want more and more of it! *That's* what satisfies.

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The grammar of this verse, and the meaning of the word in this promise, tells you four things to about this blessing, and I'll just make them into a list for you. Number 1—This is a satisfaction that fills *thoroughly*; it satisfies *genuinely*. The word that's translated "satisfied" is a Greek word that was often used for an animal that was fed until it wanted no more—it would just walk away from the food. It means: "completely satisfied." Outside of the Bible, when the word was used for men, it describes "filling with an abundance of food." In other words: to be "completely filled." Or as David and Mary both said: "For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul He has filled with what is good" (Ps. 107:9; cf. Lk. 1:53). So it's a *complete* satisfaction. This is *true* satisfaction.

Number 2—This satisfaction comes *only* to "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Same thing we've seen in the earlier Beatitudes, when it says: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for *they*..." That little pronoun "they"—it doesn't need to be there in the Greek, but *it is*, which makes it *emphatic*. It means: "*They* will be satisfied; *only* they will be satisfied; *no one else* can experience this satisfaction—unless they have this hunger." You'll never know the fullness of God's goodness to you, nor will you know the ultimate of what He might do through you, until you seek His righteousness with the kind of passion with which a *starving* man would dig into that meal, or a *thirsty* woman would just thank God for that glass of water.

Third thing we can tell: This is a satisfaction which comes from God Himself. The verb that's translated "satisfied" is in the "passive voice"—you don't satisfy yourself; you *can't* satisfy yourself; you *receive* the satisfaction, and obviously, God is the source of it. The satisfaction is not *merely* in the pursuit—the satisfaction is in the gift given by the One that you pursue; it's the goodness of God that gives this to you. James 1:17 says this: "Every good thing given"—you might read into that: "Everything that Jesus promised to bless in the Beatitudes—"Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." The *best* things, the *good* things—they come from the hand of God. Or Jeremiah 31, Verse 14—" 'I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance, and My people will be satisfied with My goodness,' declares the Lord." It comes from *His* hand.

So it is a satisfaction which is thorough. It is satisfaction that comes only to "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." It is a satisfaction that comes only from God Himself. And Number 4—God guarantees that this satisfaction is for *now* and *all time*. As we saw in the future-tense version of the promises with some of these Beatitudes, this one is the same: It's not future tense in the sense that, in *this* life, if you live on the edge of starvation and dying of thirst, then *some time off in the future*, you're going to be satisfied. It's future *only* in relation to the hungering and thirsting. In other words: *every time* you hunger and thirst for righteousness, every time you *want* the right thing, you will be filled to satisfaction—*right now*, this era, this age, right now. Now, it's *also* true: in the Kingdom of God, you *will be* satisfied. It's also true: in the "new heaven" and the "new earth" (Rev. 21:1), you *will be* satisfied. But if you think about it: this Beatitude *makes no sense* if it's all only about the Kingdom, because when Jesus is reigning in His Kingdom, He's the "King of righteousness" (Heb. 7:2)—righteousness will be the order of the day; He's going to rule with perfect righteousness (Heb. 1:8).

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That's why I said, in the last visit to the previous Beatitude: this is *part* of the reason that Jesus taught His disciples, and all of us, to pray a certain way. It's coming up in our text, about one chapter from now: Matthew Chapter 6, Verse 10—"Your kingdom come. Your will be done"—I *want* this to happen—"on earth as it is in heaven." So while I'm waiting for Your kingdom to come, I'm hungering and thirsting for Your righteousness to be manifested *through me*—I want to be an *instrument* of righteousness (cf. 1 Pet. 2:12).

Now, understand: we want to seek righteousness. Wherever we have a chance to speak into a situation, we should speak truth, and we should be an influence in the direction of righteousness (Phil. 2:15). But understand: when it says "they will be satisfied," this is not a promise that *in this world* we will see a righteous *outcome* in every situation. As a matter of fact: if you're going to practice righteous, if you're going to hunger and thirst for righteous, you're going to be living a godly life. And "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12; cf. 1 Pet. 4:4; Ps. 37:12; Prov. 29:27b).

You won't always get a righteous outcome, but you *can*—and you *should*—always seek to know what righteousness is, because you know the Word of God (Ps. 119:99-100); you should seek to *proclaim* righteousness (Prov. 24:25; Ezek. 3:19); and the only way people can *have* righteousness is to be "in Christ" (Rom. 8:1; cf. 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9); and the only way they can be in Christ is to believe in Him (Acts 26:18; Gal. 2:16; 2 Tim. 3:15), and the only way they'll believe in Him is if we *tell* them about Him by preaching the gospel (Rom. 10:14, 17). We should always seek to *practice* righteousness in what we do and in what we say (Eph. 4:1, 29; Col. 3:17), but God does not promise we can always *achieve* a righteous outcome in every situation. That's why we keep praying: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

And don't forget the end of Romans Chapter 12. After telling us: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (vs. 18), Paul says this: "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God..." In other words, I'm going to *try* to be an instrument of righteousness in every situation that I can, but I'm not going to try to get even for what's done to me (Prov. 20:22; 24:29); that's not mine to worry about. He continues: "For it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. 'But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' " You might not be able to bring about a perfectly righteous outcome in every situation, but you can *always* be a representative of the Prince of Righteousness—of Christ Himself. And then, Paul finishes that up: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Well, that's Matthew Chapter 5, Verse 6—that's one whole Beatitude! What are we going to *do* with ourselves for the rest of our time? Well, I came up with something. What might we do in response to this? One of the difficulties is to take something as beautiful as these Beatitudes and just *leave it there* as this nebulous idea. What can we do in *response* to this? Well, *I* think this is kind of timely. We're living in unprecedented days. It's kind of easy, in our world, to feel lonely—especially when they told us, for eight or ten weeks, to stay home; don't go anywhere; don't do anything; don't talk to anybody; don't have any human interaction.

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We have world leaders now—I mean, this isn't just the mayor of Boise, the governor of Idaho, the President of the United States, the Centers for Disease Control—it's worldwide. We have world leaders so *terrified* of a microscopic virus that they're willing to cripple the world economy to fight it. That's never happened before! Countless thousands of people who can *least* afford the impacts of those decisions are being *devastated*.

And it's pretty easy to think: "I don't like this! Are we ever going to get back to *normal*?" And, of course, we define "normal" as how it was for *us* six months ago in our comfortable American lifestyle. And by the way: *that's* not normal. We have been blessed to live in the *most* prosperous, *most* healthy, *most* prolific country that has ever existed. We've *never* been even close to "normal" for what most of the world has experienced in the history of mankind.

And you know what? We might never get back to that! It might *never again* be like it was in the beginning of the year 2020. (see Ecc. 7:10) I can't promise that it'll be different. I mean, what if it goes on for *two years*, that we can't sit within six feet of each other at church? I don't like that, not even a little bit! And it's *easy* to start wishing that you could just go be with the Lord. I'm sure a lot more people are praying the Apostle John's prayer—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20, NKJV)—than were praying that prayer six months ago!

So let me make a few comments, and I actually will connect it to our Beatitude, and I'm going to make a challenging—but I think, appropriate—appeal to you. First of all: if you're thinking, "Lord, I can't *take* this anymore! Just get me *out of here*!" Well, understand: you probably need an attitude adjustment. But also understand: you're not alone (see 1 Kings 19:4; Job 3:11, 21-22; 7:15). It's encouraging to know you're not alone, when you're going through something hard. And you're not—as a matter of fact, do you know that you're in *pretty good company*? Did you ever read any of the *Psalms*?—David saying, "They're closing in on me from all sides! Death is near me!" And then he starts talking about the Lord, and when he finishes the psalm, he's still in the same mess, but he's praising God! So, yeah, there's room for an attitude adjustment there.

But you're in pretty good company—even among the Apostles. How about Paul? Paul wrote the most well-known passages on this. One of them is Philippians 1:21 through 26; his famous words: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." You know, in hard days, you can say: "Wow! I sure would like to just be with the Lord! Give me the 'gain,' please!" (cf. Ps. 16:11; 42:2)

But he goes on to say: "But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again." He made no bones about it: "To die is gain." Compared what's going on now, this is "very much better." If I can only be in His presence...

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And by the way: do you know where he was when he wrote that? He was in a prison cell in Rome, where he had been for about two years. Oh, and *before* he got to that prison cell, what he'd *gone* through... Just read about it: Second Corinthians Chapter 11, Verses 23 through 29. In our Scripture reading this morning, in Acts 23, we saw the plot to ambush him and kill him; and that was just *one* of them, and they didn't even wing him in that one. But it's horrible—he had been beaten, left for dead, whipped with a scourge.

When you reach the point of just wanting to escape, remember: God is in control. Don't forget that. (see Ps. 121:2-3, 5-8; 2 Tim. 4:18) He has you here in order for you to be "blessed" as you "hunger and thirst for righteousness." He wants to do something through you—praying for other people, serving other people, telling the gospel to other people—whatever it might be.

Another one that Paul wrote—Second Corinthians Chapter 5, the first two verses, and then down to Verses 6 through 8. He says: "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down"—that's a metaphor for: "if my body dies," and he calls that "the earthly tent"—"we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven." And then, down to Verse 6—"Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." He said it again: In this life—in this "earthly house"—we "groan." God knows the groanings of His people as they experience severe misery, even oppression (Ps. 56:8; Is. 63:9a). Stephen cited that; as he was about to be stoned, in Acts Chapter 7, Verse 34, he alluded to Exodus Chapter 3.

Or, how about this one—also from the Apostle Paul: Romans 8:23 through 25—"And not only this"—well, what does that refer to? "Not only this" is all creation groaning while it's waiting for the lifting of the Curse. "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit"—even we that are saved, that have the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9)—"even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it."

He was *eager* to be with the Lord. It's "very much better"! He would *love* to be there! But, while we are walking by faith, while we are waiting for it, he says we wait for it "with perseverance." The word that's translated "perseverance" there is a cool Greek word composed of two parts; it literally means: "remaining under," as in, "bearing up under a burden." God promises to give us the ability to persevere (see Ps. 68:19). Even when you're looking at this "house" in which you live, this "tent," "the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24), and you're saying, "I feel *useless*!"—God is going to enable you to persevere. And by the way: the word that's translated "persevere" or "perseverance" is also translated "endure" and "endurance," as in James Chapter 1, Verses 2 through 4. That was an Apostle! You're in *pretty good company*, if you'd rather just get out of here! But you're here—by God's grace, by His mercy—with His Holy Spirit to provide you the endurance.

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Or, how about the Apostle John? His prayer couldn't have been much more clear; I've already alluded to it—it's the end of your Bible: Revelation 22:20—"He who testifies to these things"—that's Jesus—"says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' " And John says: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Now, it's not John *the Baptist*, it's John the Apostle; but he obviously *was* a Baptist—he's shouting, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus." I'm sure that, for at least the last 50 years before that, John was praying that prayer that we've already seen: Matthew 6:9 and 10—"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.' "

Paul and John and all the others who went through this, that we have recorded in Scripture—they continued to minister comfort and encouragement, when they *really* preferred that they could just be with the Lord (Jn. 13:17). And they kept doing it, right up until the end. And how did God bless them? Martyrdom. I've done a lot of funerals; and even in just the 17-year history of Heritage Bible Church, we've done a lot of them—but not one of them has been a martyr. We're not there *yet*. Let's hang in there!

Now, how does that connect with "hunger and thirst for righteousness"? Well, He *tells* you to "hunger" for something. Remember the analogy of your favorite food? When you eat it, you find it satisfying, so you have the hunger to eat it again, right? I titled this: "Cultivate Your Appetite," and one of the most universal needs, I think, among Christians in our generation is to cultivate the right appetite (Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:1-2; cf. Hos. 6:3).

I want to suggest to you that you practice "fasting" and "feasting"—"fasting" from bad things, and "feasting" on good things (Jb. 1:1; Ps. 1:1-2; 119:37). And so, here's my little exhortation—"invitation," if you want to call it that—to apply "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness": I want to urge you to commit to a special diet, at least for a while. Take control of things that cultivate "hunger and thirst for righteousness" and things which *truly* satisfy.

Now, this diet that I'm going to recommend has *nothing* to do with what you put into your mouth. I don't care what you eat. If you want to go on a Spam and Twinkies diet, that's fine. You may not experience righteousness, but...I want you to think about what you are training your soul to desire (see Rom. 6:19).

So, here is my three-part plan. Now, look: I'm not going to *enforce* this on anybody. I do not have the ability to turn on the camera on your computer and watch what you're doing. I don't know how to hack your cellphone. I won't be checking your calls. I won't be checking your Internet usage. I have *no power whatsoever*, but—I want to invite you to do something. It's a three-part plan. Do it if you want to. Don't do it, if you don't think it would help you. But here's the 30-day special diet:

Part Number 1—Continue With the Necessary Things. I'm *not* asking anyone to become a monk, okay? Don't run away from life. You need to go to work, you need to go to school, care for your family, pay your bills, eat, sleep, do chores. I promise, in the next 30 days, something unexpected is going to come along; you're going to have to handle the exigencies of life. We're not trying to pull you out of the world.

Sermon Title: Cultivate Your Appetite

Speaker: Jim Harris

Scripture Text: Matt. 5:6 (Sermon on the Mount #5)

Date: 7-5-20

There's a fantastic piece of advice that I once read. It's from a famous golf instructor; he's trained some of the most well-known, famous golfers in history. I believe he was a Believer; he has died, and I think he's with the Lord now. Here's his *first* golf lesson. I'm thinking, "I want to get better at golf," so I open this famous book. How to Learn to Play Golf, Lesson 1—"When I tell you to take an aspirin, don't take the whole bottle." Isn't that wise? You tell people: "Here's a good thing to do," and they go full-bore into that. What he's saying is that, "I might tell you to change something—don't get weird about it!" So, Part 1—Continue With the Necessary Things. But, there's a Part 2 and a Part 3.

Part 2—I want to recommend that you go on a 30-day fast. It doesn't have anything to do with food; I do recommend that you eat healthy, but that's up to you. What does "fast" mean? Deny yourself, don't do it (see Est. 4:16). This is a fast from things which tend to cause you stress, which tend to distract you from the best spiritual things, and things which tend to exacerbate discouragement and depression. What do I want you to fast from? I recommend—again: *recommend*, I'm not going to force anybody—I recommend staying away, as in total fasting for 30 days, from radio and television news, Internet news sources, and political talk shows, to start with.

I think one of the *worst* things that has happened, for a lot of Christian people, is the advent of Fox News, because it is less overtly anti-Christian than the other ones, and so some people get hooked on it. *You can do without it!* If there's anything important enough, *you'll find it out!* Trust me! And, all the better—I mean, I don't want to make this easy for you—all the better, if you were to stay from all social media. Now, I said "all the better"—this isn't a law. I realize, a lot of people stay in touch with family and friends by social media—especially these days, while we are isolated. I get it! I mean, if you want to communicate via Facebook with family or friends or whatever, I don't have any problem with something like that. But, if you *do* look at any social media, *please*, for 30 days, skip past—or, if you have the ability, delete—*anything* having to do with current events and politics. They will still be current, and they'll still happen, even if you don't fill your mind with it. *The world will go on*, I promise! Please commit to posting *absolutely nothing* online about current events. And if you accidentally see something in that realm, just don't respond. Do you know: it's okay to see something totally asinine online, and *not* comment? It's okay! I think some people don't realize that that's true.

Now, how valuable could this be? Well, I poked around for over three minutes, and I found some statistics. In 2019—that's last calendar year—the average amount of time spent on social networking—this doesn't even include the TV news and all of that—the average time spent on social networking by Americans was 153 minutes per day. Now, you're probably sitting here and saying, "Well, somebody else can have the 150—I spend about *three* minutes a day!" Well, if you do it at all, I'm sure you spend more than three minutes, and *nobody* is going to be the average of 153—that's an average; everybody's going to be different. And I can't *imagine* what that number is like in 2020, since most people's fellowship has *all* been with a computer or a telephone for months. Combine that with what you might spend watching or hearing news on television or radio or Internet—trust me, if you do the 30-day fast of things that cause distress or distract from spiritual things or exacerbate discouragement or depression, you're going to free up some time!

Sermon Title: Cultivate Your Appetite

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Part 3—Don't just *deny* yourself...*Feast*. Go on a 30-day *feast*. Now, if you only free up five minutes a day—I mean, if you *really* only listen to the radio, watch TV, or check the Internet or look at social media for five minutes a day, devote your newly-found five minutes of free time. Or, if it's 153 minutes—wow, are you going to be blessed! Or if you're one who *stretches* that average, you're going to be so spiritual in a month, we might not be able to stand being around you! I want you to feast—provide a feast for your soul (3 Jn. 2; cf. Ps. 25:13; 34:8).

Some things you might do—what might you do with that time in which you would be feasting for your soul?

Maybe commit yourself to reading through a book of the Bible. A very good suggestion that I've been hearing for some time now, and it's a really practical thing to do: read through a book of the Bible, *at whatever pace you want*, and read all the notes in your Study Bible that go with it along the way, and maybe even the cross-references, and for sure the introduction to the book. You might just come out knowing a book of the Bible better than you ever dreamed possible!

Or, maybe commit yourself to reading or rereading a good Christian book. I know the vast majority of the people at Heritage Bible Church have this one, called "None Other" (by John MacArthur)—it's about the attributes of God; I just mention this one because we gave it away as a gift to everyone that attended our last "Spreading the Heritage" conference. I promise, if you'll devote at least part of your 30 days of feasting for your soul to the attributes of God, you're going to come out way better. I promise you'll be encouraged and your faith will grow. The more you make yourself constantly aware that God is sovereign and He is good (Ps. 119:68), the less you will need to remind yourself that you need never to fret (as we read in Psalm 37 last week), you need not fear (Ps. 27:1), and you need not remain anxious (Phil. 4:6-7).

Or, maybe you've never read "The Pilgrim's Progress" (by John Bunyan), or maybe it's been a long time since you have. Commit yourself to doing something like that. Maybe there's a book laying around that you wish you'd gotten to, and you haven't. With your new 153 minutes a day, or your 17 minutes a day—whatever it is, go for it!

If you're more of an auditory learner, *listen* to good things. You can go to sermonaudio.com and listen to good expository preaching. If you're watching us on our livestream right now, you are connected to sermonaudio.com. [Sermonaudio.com](http://sermonaudio.com) does a *lot* more than just livestreaming church services—there are *tons* of mostly relatively unknown, really good Bible expositors who are connected with sermonaudio.com. It doesn't have the wackos on that site; you have to agree to a doctrinal position to be screened onto there.

Maybe look for people like Voddie Baucham—he has his own website, *packed* with great sermons; and he's a really good source on some of the things going on in our world these days. Look for people like Steve Lawson or R.C. Sproul—he's still preaching, although he's been dead for a couple of years; he has a lot of great stuff recorded.

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Alastair Begg, maybe Kevin DeYoung, Phil Johnson, John MacArthur—there's a whole bunch of people that you could listen to. If you finish everything that those guys have done, before the 30 days is over, come see me—I'll direct you to some more.

You know, you can even use YouTube, if you want to—as long as you *discipline* yourself not to be distracted. I've been sending you the "Daily Gems," and I get a lot of them off of YouTube—songs, or a little teaching, or something like that. That is *so well done*, because you play the one that you were looking for, and you know what happens over to the side? The next one, the next one, the next one, the next one—and it's like being in a candy store; it's *real easy* to go and listen to a three-minute song on YouTube, and spend 45 minutes. As long as you can control yourself, you can go there. I know our friend Justin Peters posts most of his teaching via YouTube. YouTube is one of those really good tools that can be used in a really bad way.

We have given everyone—and if you're watching on the little box, we're going to mail yours to you, if you haven't been at church to pick it up—we've given everyone "The American Gospel," Part 1 and Part 2, a couple of DVDs; really good stuff there. Oh, and those might set you off on a whole bunch of productive rabbit trails.

You could do your own 30-day version of our "64 Days of Truth"—spend 3 days on each Attribute, instead of a week.

Here's one you could do *right smack-dab* where we are: Take the Sermon on the Mount, and what if you read through one chapter of it—it's three chapters long, Matthew 5, 6, and 7—what if you read Chapter 5 every day for a week, and then Chapter 6 for a week, and then Chapter 7 for a week; or, if you read Chapter 5 today, Chapter 6 tomorrow, and Chapter 7 the next day, and then reread it the next 3 days, and keep doing that through the 30 days—ten times in the month...you'll *love* it!

Now, here's the point: I'm *suggesting* this. We live in *weird* times! *Fast* from the things that make you focus on the weirdness. *Feast* your soul on the best things. And when you finish the 30-day fast and feast, look back and take stock of what you might want to incorporate into your life for the long haul. You're not alone, but you may be denying yourself the *wrong* things, and feeding yourself the things that just make it harder for you (see Lk. 11:34-36; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; Titus 2:11-12).

Let's pray:

Father, we thank You for Your Word, and thank You for its power, and thank You for its clarity. Lord, these are just my suggestions, and I'm just one of Your under-shepherds, but I pray that You would teach us all, as Your people, to cultivate our appetites for the very best things. Feed our souls, we pray. Make us those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" so that we would better and better be influences for righteousness, wherever You may take us. Have Your way with us to that end, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.