

Sun., Jan. 31: (Recorded and in-person worship!)

Memory Verse: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.” -Matthew 5:6

Message: **Momentum (The Beatitudes) #5: Righteousness** -Pastor David

Sermon Scripture: John 6:26-35 (CEB)

Reading of Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-6

Blurb: Are you hungry? Jesus says that hungry people are blessed. Not hungry for just anything, however: hungry and thirsty for righteousness (living God’s way). Developing a hunger for holiness comes through training over time our taste away from selfishness and towards God’s plan. This Sunday we’ll hear how Jesus, as our Bread of Life, trains our hunger!

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor Andrew

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.” -
Matthew 5:6

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

For God Alone (Psalm 62)

I Love to Tell the Story

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *For God Alone (Psalm 62)* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.” -
Matthew 5:6

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

I Love to Tell the Story

Blessed Are All (Only in Jesus)

Questions (You Are Faithful)

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

WORSHIP PRAYER & LED PRAYER -Pastor Andrew

SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 55:1-6 (CEB) -Reader: Bob Rosenbaum

The prophet Isaiah calls out God’s invitation to come to Him and to enjoy Him. God uses the image of a feast to describe what it is like to truly find Him. Isaiah 55:1-6,

1 All of you who are thirsty, come to the water!

Whoever has no money, come, buy food and eat!

Without money, at no cost, buy wine and milk!

**2 Why spend money for what isn’t food,
and your earnings for what doesn’t satisfy?**

**Listen carefully to me and eat what is good;
enjoy the richest of feasts.**

**3 Listen and come to me;
listen, and you will live.**

**I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful loyalty to David.**

**4 Look, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a prince and commander of peoples.**

**5 Look, you will call a nation you don’t know,
a nation you don’t know will run to you
because of the Lord your God,
the holy one of Israel, who has glorified you.**

**6 Seek the Lord when He can still be found;
call Him while He is yet near.**

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: -Tsubaki children

MESSAGE: Momentum (The Beatitudes) #5: Righteousness

PP#1: Momentum (The Beatitudes): Righteousness

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” -
Matthew 5:6

Momentum (The Beatitudes). Righteousness. Matthew 5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

PP#2: *Picture of us in front of Vienna’s St. Stephan’s Cathedral*

When we were in Europe two years ago, I drug my family to the cathedral in every town we went to. When we were in Vienna, for example, we started at St. Stephen’s. It just so happened that they were doing a processional to the church that day. We enjoyed the service and the outside of the cathedral. It has an amazing tile pattern in the roof, I noticed. Beethoven stood where I was when he realized that he was fully deaf, for he looked at the bell tower and saw the birds scatter at the ringing of bells that he could no longer hear at all. I then went looking for the plaque that marked Mozart’s

relationship with the church: how he was married there, had his kids baptized there, how he was appointed adjunct music director there before he died, and how his funeral was also there.

PP#3: *Picture of the ell standards of St. Stephens in Vienna.*

Well, on the western facade I happened upon, embedded into the foundation about four feet above ground, the medieval ell standards for the town (ell is an obsolete measure of six hand breadths). You see, in the Middle Ages, each city set its own measure standards, particularly for cloth. They needed a set standard which all the merchants could use, especially traveling merchants, to comply with local standards. So, they put the length in iron bars and attached them to the cathedral. The top standard is the drapery ell, and is 30.6 inches. The lower one, the linen ell, is 35.3 inches long. This one has become known as The Viennese Yard.

What powerful imagery! The standard that sets how things are measured for the community is fixed—shown and shared—at the church!

Righteousness, according to the Bible, is holy and upright living, in compliance with God's standard. It comes from the root word for "straightness" as conforming to an authoritative standard.

Today we hear Jesus saying that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness—living according to God's standard—are blessed.

Now, He is saying this right smack in the middle of His listing out the marks of the blessed life. The Beatitudes are a description of the godly life, a life that conforms to God's standards. But just like the standards at St. Stephen's, they show how to achieve God's plan for our lives. "Follow this pattern!"

PP#4: *Image of a gymnast on the platform reaching for the rings.*

We step up to the platform when we desire more for our lives, when we choose God's plan as our life's goal. We can all reach the first ring, which Jesus says is admitting that we are poor in spirit, that we have nothing in and of ourselves that makes any progress. We need God's help. That gives us the momentum to reach the next ring: to mourn our sin and desire to leave it behind. That gives us momentum to grab the third ring: godly meekness. We must submit and put our mission under God's mission. These three rings are all a journey of spiritual humility: letting go of selfishness to receive God's grace. These three are all about seeing ourselves for who we are and who we need to be.

PP#5: *Image from Smith's book of the sketch of the tree representing the Beatitudes*

This now brings us to a pivotal point in the Beatitudes. The first three empty us of ourselves so that the Holy Spirit can begin to have sway in our lives. We now have created room for the Holy Spirit to speak to us, to start taking control, to guide us into God's good path of life. Jesus has taught us to cultivate these first three blessings, which we find are the *roots* of the godly life. And from these *roots* come the *shoot*, the life of God's good path: which is righteousness, godly living. It's a life that desires to be like Jesus, to embrace Christian discipleship.

Again, this life is cultivated and led by the Holy Spirit released within us. And this shoot of righteous living bears *fruit* in the mature Christian's life, the fruit of mercy, purity of heart, and being a peacemaker. We also bear the fruit of blessing as we are persecuted for following God's call.

So, we are now at the pivotal point in the Beatitudes when we move from the roots we cultivate to the shoot of godly life. Jesus describes the Christian life as a hunger and thirst for righteousness. This is the life that God plans for you!

PP#6: Momentum (Beatitudes): Righteousness

1. Hunger

Notice that Jesus says that it is *a hunger* for righteousness that describes the godly life. He doesn't say it's perfectly living the righteous life. Aren't you glad that He didn't say that only those who are righteous are blessed? That keeps you in the blessing even when you mess up or get off track. And, remember that Jesus, in the Beatitudes, is pushing inward past external actions. You see, we can live our outward lives in conformity to rules and standards through resignation, or obedience, or even through feeling self-righteous. Jesus is honing in on the motivation, in the heart. Those who *desire* to live righteously, who *yearn* to keep in step with Jesus, who are motivated out of eagerness to embrace it, they have the blessed life. You are blessed when you live in this direction, when you pursue holiness.

Hunger. You see, it's not some passing interest or armchair investment. Jesus is after an intense desire that drives your motivation. It's not the *success* of being righteous that's to drive you, it's instead the *love of God's way* that does. For when you long for God's way, then you are eagerly pursuing it. You will conform your whole life to it, seek it with passion. Psalm 41:1-2 "Just like a deer that pants for streams of water, so does my soul long for you, O God. My whole being thirsts for God, for the living God." Psalm 63:1 "God, my God! I search for you! My soul thirsts for you! My body desires you like in a dry and weary land with no water around." Jesus says this describes the Christian life. Does this describe you? Do you have this hunger?

PP#7: Momentum (Beatitudes): Righteousness

1. Hunger

2. For holiness

Hunger is natural. Every baby knows hunger. Every creature, from the instant it is born, feels a driving hunger. The pivotal insight here is that **WHAT** you are hungry for *can be changed!*

The past year and a half I've been trying to change my eating behaviors. I've lost 100 pounds, mostly, by changing my diet. I used to eat a lot, and I really enjoyed burgers, fries, pizza, ice cream. Fresh veggies tasted great with dip, or cheese sauce, or salt. I used Ranch dressing to virtually make a stew out of my salad. Baked potatoes came only with butter, sour cream, bacon, cheese, and salt. My weight was the result of eating the wrong foods in the wrong amounts and at the wrong times. I remember a year ago crabbily chewing on carrot sticks while dreaming about Entenmanns.

This past Christmas I allowed myself a *food vacation* to indulge in more extravagant eating again. And although I still enjoyed the gooey pizza, the deep fried fish and chips, the doughnuts and homemade ice cream, it was just not as good as it used to be. Doughnuts tasted greasy. A bowl of ice cream felt like too much. And I looked over at a nearby salad when eating my burger.

When I went back to eating smarter again, I noticed how much I had come to enjoyed the taste of plain, raw vegetables. I'm not lying! They each have a taste that I now really, really enjoy. I get hungry for steamed broccoli. I salivate for a grilled chicken breast.

I've changed! My tastes have changed! My appetite has changed! I now hunger for different things than I used to. But it has happened slowly. It's taken months. But we can retrain our hungers. *You learn to want what you ingest over time.*

What about our spiritual diet? How do you prefer to spend your time? Do you fill your daily diet with long hours of work, with the never-ending drama of relationships, with video games, with movies, with recreation, with shopping, with experiences? These can be good things. But too much of good things is also a problem. Balance is the right things in the right amount at the right times.

Does worship and prayer and reading the Bible seem bland and tasteless? Does Jesus' description of hungering and thirsting after righteousness seem unattractive? Then spiritually, we need to change our diets. We will begin to love what we feed ourselves. Every coffee drinker proves this true. Coffee, scientifically, is not a taste the tongue enjoys naturally. But we learn to love it.

What appetite is shaping your life? What steady diet is shaping your appetite?

In John 6 is the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand. The people are amazed! But when they come looking for Him the next day, Jesus teaches them about true bread. Turn to John 6:26:26.

PP#8-10: John 6:26-35 (CEB)

26 Jesus replied, "I assure you that you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate all the food you wanted. 27 Don't work for the food that doesn't last but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Human One will give you. God the Father has confirmed Him as His agent to give life."

28 They asked, "What must we do in order to accomplish what God requires?"

29 Jesus replied, "This is what God requires, that you believe in Him whom God sent."

30 They asked, "What miraculous sign will you do, that we can see and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

32 Jesus told them, "I assure you, it wasn't Moses who gave the bread from heaven to you, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 The bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

34 They said, "Sir, give us this bread all the time!"

35 Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But I told you that you have seen me and still don't believe. 37 Everyone whom the Father gives to me will come to me, and I won't send away anyone who comes to me. 38 I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but the will of Him who sent me. 39 This is the will of the One who sent me, that I won't lose anything He has given me, but I will raise it up at the last day. 40 This is my Father's will: that all who see the Son and believe in Him will have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

"6:26 Jesus replied, 'I assure you that you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate all the food you wanted. 27 Don't work for the food that doesn't last but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Human One will give you. God the Father has confirmed Him as His agent to give life.'

"28 They asked, 'What must we do in order to accomplish what God requires?'

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“30 They asked, ‘What miraculous sign will you do, that we can see and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’

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PP#11: Momentum (Beatitudes): Righteousness

1. Hunger
2. For holiness
3. Jesus is the Bread of Life

Jesus is the bread that really satisfies. When we hunger after anything else, if we give ourselves a steady diet of shopping, or financial success, or bodily fitness, or movies, or pornography, we will just want more and more and more. We are never satisfied. A year ago three cookies was never enough. Now, one is completely sufficient.

There is an image for hell of a thirsty person floating up to his neck in cool water. Yet each time he tips his head to get a drink, the water pulls away. He’s never able to get satisfied. Hell. In Luke 16:24, Jesus told the story of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man, in hell, begged God to have Lazarus dip his hand in the water and let it drip on his parched tongue to offer cool relief.

How many of us live daily in a hell like this, indulging in all kinds of “foods” that never really satisfy? But when we change our diet to Jesus, feeding on His Word and presence in our lives, we have a satisfaction that touches the core of our being.

Paul, in Philippians 3, is speaking from prison. He’s at the end of his life, after serving Jesus as a missionary for decades. And he writes how he—above everything else in the world—has this appetite for only Jesus.

When we make Jesus our regular diet, the Holy Spirit within us changes our hunger to desire Him above all other hungers. The Holy Spirit uses our poverty of spirit, our mourning of sin, our meekness, to train us in wanting Jesus above all other loves. He makes us, so that this description can be said of us: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

PP#12: Momentum (Beatitudes): Righteousness

1. Hunger
2. For holiness
3. Jesus is the Bread of Life
4. “...so that we might no longer live for ourselves...”

Jesus says He is our Bread of life. So, have you ever thought about why He came to die on the cross? Why was He sacrificed? My first answer is usually to say it was to earn our forgiveness from our sins. I might add that it was also to earn us eternal life. These are true. But the Bible, in its grand statements of atonement, says it was in order to feed us righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:15 “He died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should not live for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised.” This is righteousness, living not our way, but God’s way! 1 Peter 2:24 Jesus died on the cross “...so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 “...so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” This is why Jesus came!

Jesus is our Bread of Life, to be our diet of righteousness so to develop in us a hunger and thirst to live as holy and godly disciples who make disciples. He grows in us a passion for righteousness!

PP#13: Momentum (Beatitudes): Righteousness

1. Hunger
2. For holiness
3. Jesus is the Bread of Life
4. “...so that we might no longer live for ourselves...”
5. Fasting: Using hunger to develop a hunger

I want to end with a couple of ways we can change our diet and develop a godly appetite. First of all, begin with the roots. Go back to the first three Beatitudes and swing through them. They will give you the momentum to grab firmly God’s righteousness. But the other practice I want to suggest to you is the ancient practice of fasting. Fasting is abstaining from food to develop and grow spiritual hunger. I want you to consider fasting from some normal and even legitimate activities, priorities, and pleasures. Even eating good foods at the wrong times and in wrong amount spoils your healthy appetite for good food. Consider your activities, how you spend your time. What drives you through the day? What do you live for? Are you always thinking about sports, travel, golf, shopping, Facebook, movies, coffee? The blessed life keeps proper things in their proper place in order to grow a hunger for holiness. It means being the master of what strives to master you.

What kind of person do you want to be? Are you happy with your life the way it is now? Are you at a level you want to stay? Perhaps you need to use fasting. Take a break from certain activities, interests, pastimes. Change your *time* diet. Take a break from online shopping until Easter. Limit your Netflix to an hour a day. Put Facebook away after 8 p.m. This will create time and interest in other things you wish you did more of. Lay off “the sauce” so you can taste the underlying flavor.

For Lent this year, starting mid-February and lasting until Easter, I’m going to be calling us as a church to fast from screens one evening a week. You’ll be hearing more about this in the newsletter coming out this week. But let’s resolve together to give fasting a try!

I want to say a word to the teens and young adults for a second. Most teens spend 3-5 hours *a day* on video platforms, either gaming or social media. And games and social media are fine. But a healthy diet is the right things in the right amount at the right times. I talk to a lot of people in the next age bracket up from you guys. They still spend loads of time gaming. But they also talk about a general struggle to find meaningful relationships, fulfilling employment and grounding spiritual practices. And part of the struggle can be the long-term pattern of rushing through school, through work, through obligations, all to go spend time gaming. Too much of an innocent thing can develop your hungers in an unhealthy way. Too little of intentional spiritual development can grow you

flabby faith. You many need to consider a better relationship with your video platforms. Make a plan to resist always just going and doing what you feel like in the moment.

PP#14: Momentum (Beatitudes): Righteousness

1. Hunger
2. For holiness
3. Jesus is the Bread of Life
4. "...so that we might no longer live for ourselves..."
5. Fasting: Using hunger to develop a hunger
6. Satisfied

Jesus gives the promise that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied. Nothing else actually delivers on this claim. Everything else leaves you unsatisfied. Pursuing godly living—holiness—is the one thing that grows the deep satisfaction that we all wish we had. This is the standard to which we measure our lives. At the church, in the center of our community, is displayed the description of the blessed life, and the way to achieve it. Ask the Holy Spirit to train in you a hunger and thirst for righteousness! Then you will be satisfied. Then you will be blessed.

Amen.

CLOSING SONG [*Live Worship Only*]: *As the Deer* -Sanctify

OFFERING: -Pastor David

-Give of your monies to God's work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in or, most conveniently, you can make an automated transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the "square" on the bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Next week's message: Momentum, the Fourth Beatitude -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied." - Matthew 5:6

BENEDICTION -Pastor David