

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Test 6 - Do I Hunger and Thirst Spiritually – Part I?*."

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse, and we've reached the end of the account of Jesus Feeding the 5,000.

I want to take this opportunity to teach the sixth test that I didn't get to in Sunday School some months back. You'll see the relationship to the miracle in a moment.

When I say the word "hunger" we typically think of food, but hunger means, "*dissatisfaction, yearning, longing; a strong or compelling desire or craving.*"

We hunger for many things, some good and some bad:

- As far as good things people hunger for:
 - If you're single, you might hunger to be married...
 - If you're married, you might hunger to have children...
 - If you're busy, you might hunger for more rest...
 - If you've lost a friend, or loved one, you might hunger for another close relationship...
- Then there are other things people hunger for that can be bad:
 - Could be fame...
 - Could be power...
 - Could be addictions, even addictions to things that were initially healthy, but have since become out of balance.

This morning I'd like to specifically talk about spiritual hunger:

- This is not a hunger of the stomach, but a hunger of the soul.
- Everyone has this hunger.
- People try to satisfy it in lots of ways.

For the sermon I'd like to show you two things:

1. First, I'd like to show you that our appetites – what we do and don't hunger for – can be one of the clearest indications of whether we are – or aren't – saved.
2. Second, I'd like to show you that if you spiritually hunger, Christ will satisfy it for you.

Let's begin by briefly looking at **Luke 6:20**...

Luke 6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

These are the Beatitudes in Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount. We covered these verses some months back so I don't want to spend much time on them now, but I want you to know a few things...

First, these verses are spiritual, and not physical. If you look at these verses physically you'll completely misunderstand them:

- When Jesus says **Blessed are you who are poor**, He's referring to people who recognize their spiritual poverty, or know they're sinners.
- When Jesus says **Blessed are you who weep now**, He's referring to people who spiritually weep, or who are broken over their sin.

But the woe I'd like you to notice is the second one in **verse 21** that says **Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.**

Everyone hungers physically at times. There's no blessing for that hunger. Jesus is discussing spiritual hunger, for which there's a blessing...and this brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: (PART I) BELIEVERS HAVE A SPIRITUAL HUNGER...

Let me be clear about what I'm saying and what I'm not saying...

I'm not saying every believer is always going to want to:

- Pray...
- Read the Bible...
- Go to church...
- Be in fellowship...
- Worship the Lord...

Hopefully you're all committed to engaging in these spiritual disciplines regularly, but we can be honest that sometimes we just don't feel like doing these things. I'm NOT saying that means you're an unbeliever.

But with that said, Christians should have a deep spiritual hunger, and these should be activities we desire to engage in fairly regularly.

If you meet people who say, "I'm a Christian," or you have children who say, "I'm a Christian," but...

- They never seem to want to pray...
- They never care to read their Bibles...
- They don't like going to church, and if they do go, it's more for social reasons than worshipping the Lord...
- They seem to want to be with unbelievers – or they're more comfortable with unbelievers – than believers...

That is very concerning. If this describes you and you think you're going to heaven:

- You need to ask yourself if this sounds more like a believer or an unbeliever.
- You need to ask yourself why you don't have the same desires that characterize believers.

Also, if you're a believer, but you recognize you're not as spiritually hungry as you should be, I would encourage you to pray that God increases your spiritual hunger...increases your desire for the spiritual disciplines.

J.R. Miller said, *"If we become satisfied with our faith, love, obedience, our communion with God, and our consecration to Christ—we are truly in a sad condition. We have ceased to grow. There are many professing Christians who are starving their souls in the midst of abundance of spiritual provision, because they have no hunger. There is nothing for which we should pray more earnestly, than for spiritual longing."*

Next, look at **verse 24**...

Luke 6:24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

25 "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

"Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

The "Four Woes" are only in Luke's Gospel, and these are the first three:

- When Jesus says **woe to you who are rich**, He's referring to people who are the opposite of **the poor** in **verse 20**. These people don't recognize their spiritual poverty. They don't think they're sinners. They think they're good people.
- When Jesus says **Woe to you who laugh now**, these people are the opposite of **those who weep** in **verse 21**. These people are not broken over their sin. They don't have a godly sorrow. Instead, they think their sin is no big deal.

But the woe I'd like you to notice is the second one in **verse 25** that says **Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry**.

This brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: (PART I) BELIEVERS HAVE A SPIRITUAL HUNGER (PART II) BUT UNBELIEVERS DO NOT.

To say these people are **full** is to say they have no spiritual hunger, and let me get you to think about something...

I don't want to sound overly simple, but if they're **full**, they must've filled up on something. Since they don't have a spiritual hunger they clearly didn't fill up on the things of the Lord, so what did they fill up on?

They became full – or filled up on – something ungodly. Jesus is discussing people who have become **full** of what the world offers.

Consider this verse...

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

John says if you have a **love** – or hunger – for the things of the world, then the love of God is not in you, which is to say you're not a Christian.

So here's another way to look at this test...

It's not just what you DO have a hunger for, it's also what you DO NOT have a hunger for. You're going to have a hunger for something. Believers hunger for the things of the Lord. Unbelievers hunger for the things of the world.

- They hunger for sin.
- They are self-indulgent; they give themselves over to sinful pleasures...think of debauchery and hedonism.
- They live for self-gratification.
- They care about nothing more than moving from one worldly event or activity to the next.
- They stuff themselves w/ everything the flesh desires.

If this describes you – if this is how you hunger – I would encourage you to examine whether you're saved. There's something wrong if people claim to be Christians – they claim to be followers of Christ – but...

- They love what He hates.
- They crave what Jesus died to save them from.

Let me briefly remind you about the Greek word *agape*...

There are a number of Greek words for love. The most well-known is *agape*. It is a sacrificial, unconditional love that loves even when it's not reciprocated. It's only used two ways in Scripture. It describes God's love for us. For example, **John 3:16** says "**For God so loved (*agape*) the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**"

The only other way *agape* is used is to describe man's love for sin. It's the word used in **1 John 2:15**...

1 John 2:15 Do not love (*agape*) the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves (*agape*) the world, the love (*agape*) of the Father is not in him.

A few verses after Jesus discussed God's love for the world in **John 3:16**, He discussed man's love for sin in **John 3:19**...

John 3:19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved (*agape*) the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

This should make perfect sense:

- *Agape* loves even when it's not reciprocated. Man loves sin even though sin doesn't love in return. In fact, sin does the opposite: **Rom 6:23** says **The wages of sin is death**. Sin's response to those who hunger for it is death.
- *Agape* loves unconditionally. It is a love that is completely independent of how the object of the love acts toward or treats the one loving it. In other words, man continues to love – or hunger for – sin regardless of the guilt, punishment, suffering, or discipline he experiences as a consequence.
- *Agape* loves sacrificially. Think of everything people are willing to give up for sin: health, dignity, jobs, finances, children, parents, marriages, friendships, churches, and even relationships with the Lord. The tragedy is that there is very little man will not sacrifice for sin.

Now here's why I mention this...

Before you became a believer, you loved – or hungered for – sin:

- You loved darkness rather than light.
- You had a hunger for sin and wickedness.
- You were self-indulgent.

But after you're saved, now you hunger for justice, morality, virtue, truth, and decency.

You're still tempted, but you have a new relationship w/ sin:

- You're dead to it.
- You no longer love it.
- At times you give in to temptation and sin, but you feel sick about it and repent.

Now sin repulses you.

So here's the question...

- Are you hungering for the things of the world?
- Are you getting stuffed on garbage that makes you spiritually sick?

Or...

Are you hungering for the things of the Lord?

- Do you hunger for Scripture?
- Do you hunger for worship?
- Do you hunger for fellowship w/ other believers?
- Do you hunger for Christ Himself?

I want to share something, and just to let you know ahead of time, I received Isaac Studt's permission for this...

At our home fellowship the other night, he questioned me about apologizing when discussing graphic portions of Scripture. I appreciated the question, b/c it made me wonder why I did that and it made me think I probably shouldn't.

So from now on if you ever think I'm being too graphic when discussing God's Word, you can take it up with Isaac...or God.

With that said, I want to discuss a graphic verse in Scripture, to make Isaac feel sorry about what he said to me. Just kidding...because it relates to what we're discussing, and I want to encourage you to take this graphic picture with you, b/c it can help you view sin the way God wants you to...which is to say the way He views sin...

2 Pet 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

A dog returning to its vomit is a truly disgusting thought!

You could read this and think, *"Did God record something this disgusting in Scripture on accident? Does He look back and say, "Ug. I wish I would've come up with something less graphic"?* Not at all!

He wants us to have this very graphic understanding of sin in our minds:

- The dog vomits, which pictures the person who – as Peter says – **escaped the defilements of the world**. They've gotten it out of their system.
- But then the dog returns to his vomit to consume it again, which pictures the person who is **again entangled [in the same sins]**.

It's a physically disgusting thought, but it should be this spiritually disgusting to us when God gives us victory over sin, and we think of returning to it.

If you're a believer, this is the image that should come to mind when thinking of returning to previous sins:

- God uses graphic, disgusting, repulsive language, because He wants us to have a view of returning to sin that is graphic, disgusting, and repulsive to us.
- When you think of returning to the sins of your past, tell yourself, "I repented of this sin – I vomited it up – and now I am going to return to it and eat it again."

If you think about it like this, hopefully your sin will be very unattractive.

And this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: HAVE YOUR APPETITES CHANGED?

After we become Christians we should see a change in our appetites.

If you were an unbeliever for some number of years...

- Going the way of the world...
- Hungering for the things of the world...

And then you were saved, your desires should've experienced a dramatic change.

I hesitate to use myself as an example, but I don't have familiarity with your testimonies, so you're forced to hear another account from my life...

After I became a Christian a number of my appetites changed.

This is difficult to strike the right balance, so let me be clear about two things:

1. First, I still have plenty of sinful struggles. I'm ashamed that I haven't grown in different ways that I feel like I should've grown by now.
2. Second:
 - a. I don't pray as much as I should.
 - b. I don't always want to read the Bible.
 - c. I don't always feel like worshiping the Lord.
 - d. I don't always want to be in fellowship.

But with that said after I became a Christian, there was a clear change in my appetites:

- I looked forward to time with the Lord...
- I wanted to read the Word...
- I was excited about attending bible studies and home fellowships...
- I wanted to be with God's people.

And these weren't desires I had before becoming a Christian.

My appetites had changed.

And this is what I'd say...

These changes – these desires I developed – gave me greater confidence in my salvation.

So here's the question...

Did your appetites change when you became a Christian?

- Can you think of sinful desires you had before becoming a Christian that are repulsive to you now...that make you think of a dog returning to its vomit?
- Can you think of godly desires that you didn't have before becoming a Christian, but you have now?

The next part of this I want you to understand is if you hunger for the things of the Lord He will satisfy you.

- In **Luke 6:21** look at the words **you shall be satisfied**.

- This is a promise from Christ.

I want to give you a great picture of this in Scripture.

In **Luke 6:21** circle the words **you shall be satisfied** and write, “**Luke 9:17.**” Now turn to **Luke 9:17**. We can finally connect this back to the feeding of the 5,000 and I can give you a picture of Jesus satisfying your spiritual hunger.

Luke 9:17a And they all ate and were satisfied.

Go ahead and pause right here. We’ll look at the rest of the verse in two weeks.

Something interesting about this miracle is even though it’s one of the greatest in the Gospels – and easily the most dramatic qualitatively speaking – there’s nothing saying a miracle took place. We assume a miracle took place, but if you think about it, Jesus could’ve fed all these people with only a few loaves and fish. It’s just that each person would’ve gotten a crumb.

The one part of the account that gives the most indication that a miracle took place is in **Luke 9:17** when it says **And they all ate and were satisfied**. The only way 20,000 people could be **satisfied**, is if you give them a lot more than five loaves and two fish.

If you write in your bible you can circle the words **and were satisfied** and write “**Luke 6:21.**” That’s when Jesus said, **Blessed are you who are hunger now, for you shall be satisfied**. You’re seeing a fantastic physical picture of that spiritual reality.

Here’s one of the lessons I had from a few weeks ago...

MIRACLES ARE CALLED SIGNS, BECAUSE THEY POINT TO SPIRITUAL TRUTHS.

Miracles take place physically, but they point to – or reveal – spiritual truths.

When Jesus fed the 5,000 it was a sign too, because it pointed to a spiritual reality or taught spiritual truth.

So the words of **verse 17** are just like everything else in the account:

- There’s the physical reality of what took place. Everything happened just like the verses describe.
- But there’s the spiritual reality or truth Jesus wanted to teach when He fed the 5,000.

So here’s the **WRONG** way to look at this account...

Jesus satisfied these people’s physical hunger and He wants to satisfy our physical hunger.

Instead, here's the right way to view this account: what Jesus did for these people physically is a picture of what He wants to do for us spiritually. And this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: JESUS WANTS TO SATISFY YOUR SPIRITUAL HUNGER.

This miracle was a sermon in action. Jesus was teaching through a physical miracle what He wants to do spiritually.

Listen to this important verse that makes this point...

Phil 4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

If you really want to mess up this verse and completely misunderstand what it's saying, then look at it physically. Think it's saying **God will supply every PHYSICAL need of yours**. It's a big mistake to look at this verse and think it's discussing anything physical.

This verse is saying **God will supply every SPIRITUAL need of yours through his riches in Christ**.

The feeding of the 5,000 is an interesting picture of this...

The people in **Luke 9** were in a desolate place:

- In **verse 12** the disciples said, "**Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages...to get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.**"
- They were far from any locations that could give them food.
- The nearest location – Bethsaida – wouldn't be able to feed all these people at once.
- They only had five loaves and two fish.

In other words, there was every reason for their needs NOT to be met, but Jesus satisfied them even though everything was against that happening.

Here's the application for us:

- It wasn't difficult for Jesus to provide for them physically, and it's not difficult for Him to provide for us spiritually.
- Even if you find yourself in a desolate place – spiritually – Jesus can provide for you.

Let me show you what happened to the people Jesus miraculously fed on the mountain. Please turn to **John 6:27**.

The context is all the people from **Luke 9** are hungry again and they've come back to Jesus to get more food. Look what He said to them...

John 6:27 Do not work for the food that perishes (physical food), but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”

They wanted more physical food, but He wanted them to want more spiritual food, and He identified Himself as the spiritual food that they should want and that could satisfy them.

Skip to **verse 35...**

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; WHOEVER COMES TO ME SHALL NOT HUNGER, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst (we’ll talk about spiritual thirst next week).

Jesus said anyone who comes to Him will never hunger or thirst again. Of course He’s not speaking physically, b/c all of these people were going to hunger and thirst again physically. Plus, if Jesus really wanted to satisfy their physical hunger He would’ve given them more physical food instead of talking about Him being the food they should desire.

Jesus was inviting them to let Him satisfy their spiritual hunger and thirst. Talk about an amazing offer!

But look what happened...

John 6:66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

That means, when they realized He wasn’t going to satisfy their physical appetites, they didn’t want anything to do w/ Him anymore:

- A lot of professing Christians are like these people.
- They wanted their physical needs met, and when they realized they weren’t going to “Have Their Best Life Now,” they departed.

John 6:67 So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?”

You get the idea this is who Jesus has left. He went from thousands to 12.

68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? “You have the words of eternal life.”

What did Peter really say? He really said, *“You have the spiritual food we want. You can satisfy our spiritual hunger.”*

Peter got it. He understood the importance of Christ’s words as the spiritual food He needed.

I want to share one more story from my life that relates to this...

When I became a Christian, there were other desires I had. I still hungered in different ways you might say:

- I wanted to get married...
- I wanted to have children...
- I wanted to be pastor...

There were these different ways I hungered, but I can sincerely say without a doubt that after becoming a Christian I never spiritually hungered again:

- I never wondered what else was out there...
- I never wondered what other religions offered...
- I never wondered what other holy books said.

I don't say that remotely as any credit to myself. I say it as a credit to Christ's ability to satisfy us spiritually.

The reason I appreciate this so much is it wasn't this way PRIOR to becoming a Christian. I spent over twenty years spiritually UNSATISFIED...

- All the rosaries didn't satisfy...
- All the prayers to Mary and saints didn't satisfy...
- All the Catholic catechisms and familiarity with man-made teachings didn't satisfy...

All of this still left me spiritually empty.

And there was one specific way I never felt satisfied that I want to elaborate on a little more...

I hope this might encourage you and prevent you from taking for granted what Christ has done for you. Sometimes it takes someone who's had an experience that's different from our own to help us appreciate what we have...

Like most Catholics I would go to a priest for confession. I would walk out of the confessional with a clear conscience, but this wouldn't last long:

- I'd start sinning again, and then I'd feel like I had to get back to a priest.
- And when I say "wouldn't last long" I'm not talking months or weeks. How long do you think I could be outside the confessional before I'd start sinning again? About five minutes.

I'm not joking when I say this: I used to think the only way I could go straight to heaven – versus having to spend some amount of time in Purgatory working off my sins – was if the church collapsed on me when I walked out of the confessional, or if I died in a car crash on the way home.

So having a clear conscience was foreign to me. I always felt guilty.

But after learning what Christ did for me, I had a clear conscience for the first time in my life. Listen to this verse...

Heb 9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, PURIFY OUR CONSCIENCE from dead works to serve the living God.

After I became a Christian, this is when I finally felt like I had a clear conscience. Before that I was always saddled with guilt.

Also, because I had a guilty conscience, I never felt like I could approach God. I thought the best I could do was approach priests, Mary, saints, or any other mediators. But listen to this verse...

Heb 10:22 LET US DRAW NEAR with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean FROM AN EVIL CONSCIENCE and our bodies washed with pure water.

We're talking about spiritual hunger and spiritual satisfaction, and before I became a Christian I never felt spiritually satisfied...b/c I never felt like I could approach God.

But once I started reading the Bible:

- Knowing Christ through the pages of Scripture...
- Learning what He had done for me...
- Understanding the Gospel and what it accomplished, including the access it gave me to God...

I was finally very spiritually satisfied.

Then I felt like I could pray the words of **Psalm 73:25 and 26**. I want to go ahead and close by reading these verses and then praying...

Psa 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail,

but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Let's pray.