

“The Hungry & Thirsty”
Maundy Thursday Matt. 5:6 04/06/23
5:00 PM ILC/FELC/ZLC Pastor Huber

Grace, mercy, and peace to you as we continue the **seventh** leg of our Lenten journey on the road from “**Dust to Glory**” on this **Maundy Thursday** on which our Savior instituted the first Lord’s **SUPPER**. Our text is from Jesus’ words in **Matt. 5:6**—**“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled.”**

A businessman decided to throw a **big party** for some of his clients, so he spared no expense. He hired the most expensive **caterer** in all of San Francisco and rented out the **Moscone Center**. He paid an army of uniformed **wait staff** to serve his guests from **gleaming silver trays**. He commissioned a huge **ice sculpture** of a **swan** and had it floating in a pool of **punch**. Engraved **invitations** were sent out in **advance**, hand-delivered by special messengers in plenty of **time** for everyone to clear their calendars. But **somehow**, when the hour came for the party to **begin**, not one guest bothered to come! After **waiting** an hour, the host asked his assistant to **get the guest list** and to begin making **phone calls**.

The **first** person his assistant called was very **apologetic**. She said she had fully intended to **come**, but just before the party, her **realtor** had called to say that the offer she placed on a piece of property had been **accepted**, but they needed to close the deal **IMMEDIATELY**. The woman decided it was only prudent to take one last look at the property before signing the **papers**, and she sincerely hoped the host would understand.

The **second** person **also** was deeply apologetic and a little **embarrassed**. *“I really meant to be there,”* he explained, *“but yesterday the Tesla dealer called to tell me that my new all-electric, Newsom-approved vehicle had finally arrived. You wouldn’t believe how long the waiting list was for this car! After a delay of six months, I just had to take it for a test drive, and I was having so much fun showing it off that the party completely slipped my mind. I’m so sorry!”*

The **next** person didn’t even **bother** to apologize. In fact, he was quite **abrupt** on the phone, saying that he and his wife had just come back from their **honeymoon** and didn’t want to be **bothered**. It turns out they’d just had their first **fight**, were on the verge of **making up**, and preferred to be **alone**!

It went on and **on** like this until the assistant had called **each name** on the guest list. **Everyone**, it seemed, had some kind of **excuse**! The host was understandably **angry**. But what was he supposed to **do**? The Convention Center was booked with a **non-refundable deposit**! The **food** was already **prepared**, and the **ice swan** was starting to **melt**! Suddenly, he got a flash of inspiration and remembered that on his way to the **Moscone Center**, he’d passed a group of **homeless** people, so he told his assistant, *“Go out there and tell them there’s a free meal for them in here!”* It didn’t take long for word to spread on the **street**, and soon there was quite a **crowd** filing sheepishly

through the entrance doors. But even with all these **newcomers**, there was still **plenty** of food, and **most** of it was in danger of going to **waste**! Looking at one of the “street people” enjoying the **hors d'oeuvres**, **another** flash of inspiration came to the businessman. *“Call the **homeless shelters**,”* he told his assistant. *“Tell them to bring all their people down **here** for dinner, as well.”*

In the **meantime**, the guest who purchased the new car happened to be driving past the Moscone Center. Feeling **guilty**, he decided to show up at the last minute. Because he’d been out driving around **all day** in his Newsom-approved, all-electric car—except for the three-hour **charging** time interlude—he didn’t have time to change into his **Armani tuxedo**, but, he thought, *“Better late than **never!**”* When he first saw the ragged-looking crowd seated at the tables, he thought he’d mistakenly come to a Salvation Army **Fundraiser**, but then he saw the host standing in the **corner** and went over to make his **amends**. But instead of being happy to **see** him, the host called for **security** and immediately had the guest **ejected** from the party. The host said, *“Not one of those who were **invited** will get a taste of my banquet.”*

There’s an old saying: *“You can lead a horse to **water**, but you can’t make him **drink**.”* In Jesus’ parable of the great banquet, He makes a **similar** point: Just because the meal’s **prepared**, that’s still no guarantee the guests will want to **partake** of it. Those who **could** have been enjoying the meal lacked the same characteristic described by Jesus in His beatitude from Matt. 5:6: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for **righteousness**, for they will be filled.”* You see, to those who come seeking God’s **blessing**, there’s a **prerequisite**.

We first need to be made AWARE of our deep, spiritual EMPTINESS before we come to His table. In other words, before we can be filled with the blessing of **righteousness**, Jesus says we first need to be **hungry** for it. Back then in a world where **starvation** was a **daily occurrence** and the next meal was far from **certain**, **hunger** must have seemed like an unlikely path to **blessing**. But Jesus says that where God’s kingdom and His **righteousness** is concerned, it’s better to come **empty** than **full**—because Jesus knows that **without** this hunger, we’d have little interest in being filled with His righteousness **anyway!** We tend to think that righteousness is the condition we must **BE** in so we can to be **blessed**. But Jesus turns the blessing **upside-down**. He doesn’t say righteousness is the **CONDITION** for blessing but that righteousness **IS** the blessing...and our **HUNGER** for it is the **precondition**. However, if you **DO** truly hunger and thirst for righteousness, God promises to provide it **for** you... but only through His **Son**. But then, if you **DON’T** hunger and thirst for righteousness to **begin** with, you wouldn’t be interested **ANYWAY**...even if Jesus were to send you an **engraved invitation!** **Soooo**...God in His goodness paves the **WAY** for our blessing by sending us a hunger and thirst for righteousness we’d otherwise—in our **SELF-righteous** minds—never even think we’d **NEED**...like the original guests in this “Parable of the Banquet”.

Our **problem** is that we live in a state of **self-denial** about our lack of true righteousness and extreme need for spiritual sustenance. The Greek literally reads, "*Blessed are those who are **famished** and **parched**.*" There are lots of things we can live without if we **HAVE** to, but food and water are absolute **necessities**. Is the righteousness that only **God** can give an absolute necessity for **you**? Is it something you desire **every day**?

In Ps. 42:1–2 David declares: "*As the deer pants for streams of **water**, so my soul pants for **You**, O God. My soul **thirsts**...for the **living God**.*" Speaking through the prophet in **Isa. 55:1–2**, the Lord says, "**Come**, all you who are **thirsty**, come to the waters; and you who have no **money**, **COME**, buy, and eat! **Come** and buy wine and milk **without** money and without **cost**. Why spend money on what is **not** bread, and your **labor** on what **does not satisfy**?" It's here that we see the **problem**. While we **need** the drink that comes without cost and the bread that God **offers**, we don't always **desire** it, because our tastes have been captivated by **other** things that have no spiritual nutritional **value**.

It's kind of like your kids or grandkids at McDonald's who want the Happy Meal only for the **toy** or like myself as a child who **hated** Cracker Jack but would convince my parents to buy me a box **anyway** just for a pitiful trinket inside worth **nothing**. But to echo of the prophet's complaint: "*Why spend money on what is **not** bread, and your **labor** on what does not **satisfy**?*"

When we were young and got caught sneaking a cookie or a piece of candy before **dinner**, our mothers would say, "**You can't eat that; you'll spoil your **appetite**!**" What a **curious phrase**! It implies that an **appetite** is a **good** thing. It suggests that the desire to be **filled** is itself **desirable**. Well, Jesus implies the same in this **beatitude**. God sometimes has to help us get over our taste for **bread** that is not **true** bread and that fails to **satisfy**. And the tool He **uses** is **HUNGER**. Deut. 8:2–3 says: "*Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years to **humble** you and to **test** you in order to know what was in your **heart**, whether or not you would keep His **commands**? He **humbled** you, **causing** you to hunger, and then feeding you with **manna**, which neither you nor your fathers had **known** to teach you that man does not live on **bread alone** but on every **Word** that comes from the mouth of the **Lord**.*" And so, there's a kind of spiritual "**hunger**" that no **earthly** bread can **satisfy** and that's meant to pave the way for a blessing **IF** we first look to **God alone** in order to fill **OUR emptiness** with **HIS righteousness** in Christ Jesus...knowing that all who come to His **table** will be **filled**.

But the **irony** is that those who are **filled** will continually hunger and thirst for **MORE** righteousness! I suspect until **now** we've been thinking of righteousness as a standard **we** can reach...like a little boy who marks his growth, **inch-by-inch** by marks on the kitchen **door frame**, comparing it to his **father's** height. The truth **IS** our Heavenly Father has an "**infinite capacity**" for righteousness. There's **no limit**. That means, then—as far as our experience is concerned **this** side of heaven—like **JELLO**, there's always room for **more**, especially at the **Lord's Table**—more and more of God's

righteousness each time we **celebrate** it as the cycle of always **hungering** and always being **filled** continues until Christ **returns**.

We realize we weren't **on** that original "**A**" **list** of guests, and yet as spiritually famished and parched **beggars**, we now eagerly accept the Savior's invitation to "**do this often**" as we gratefully partake of His blessed meal...but **especially** on this **Maundy Thursday**—the night in which Christ Himself has **created** a hunger and thirst for this bread and wine for His followers that can only be filled and quenched **by His own true body and blood**, leaving us at the same time with a righteousness that is not our **own** and yet that **BECOMES** our own through this Holy Sacrament. So come and be **filled!** The invitations have been **extended**, His table is **ready**, and now God's very special **guests** have arrived...each one of them trusting in our Savior's promise that, "**Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, for **they** are the ones who will be **filled**."

In our Savior's precious **Name and PROMISE**, Amen!