

JOINING JESUS' FEAST AGAINST THE GRAIN - Part 5 Ben Rudolph

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you this morning on a cloudy, rainy, cold winter day, and I am glad you are here. Let's open up our Bibles to Matthew Chapter 5 where we will be this morning.

The elders just got back from spending a week praying and listening to God for help in deciding where He wants the church to go. It was an amazing week, and when God gives clarity, vision, and direction we can't help but move in that direction. So we can't wait to share that with you when we have the State of the Church address on March 7th, which is the first Sunday in March. We normally have done this in January, but we wanted to push it back until after we had our elder retreat this year. With all of the things that have shifted in our country with Covid it has been a stormy year, and yet what we want to do is realign our hearts and minds to what we believe that God has called us to. So I hope you will make every effort to be here on March 7th.

I am super excited about tonight where we are going to just come together and pray. I believe prayer is the one thing that no matter what I try in life to make life work better, or to solve my problems, prayer is the thing that God uses more than anything else in my life. And we live in a time, a season by which the church needs prayer, our nation needs prayer and we all need prayer individually. Amen? (*Amen.*) So I hope that you will come out and be a part of this tonight.

This morning we will be in Matthew Chapter 5, and this will be the lesson on the fourth Beatitude. Remember Jesus is giving this sermon and talking about what it means to be a part of the kingdom, the kingdom of Heaven, or the kingdom of God. It is what is going to compel us to do things differently than what seems normal and natural to us. That is why we called this series, 'Against the Grain.' That is also why you see a bunch of wood back behind me on the stage. You know when you slide your hand against the wood grain it can be very smooth, but when you slide your hand against the grain it can be very rough and you will probably get a splinter in your hand.

So knowing that when we do things the way Jesus asks us to it is going to look different. We are going to look different. We are going to live differently. We are going to act differently. We are going to think differently and believe differently. There is this invitation of Jesus to do things His way. And we have gone through these first three Beatitudes and we are ready today for number four.

I want us to notice that The Beatitudes kind of go in these couplets. There are the first four and then there is a second grouping of four, and both groupings end with this statement about righteousness. So Jesus talks about being poor in spirit, about those who mourn, and about the meek. And it is this idea of understanding our desperation of God, understanding how sin has affected us in our world, and understanding our powerlessness to change anything if not for God's moving in us.

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And that leads us to this fourth Beatitudes which says, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*” “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*” Now all of these statements are pretty straightforward and not really difficult to understand. And there is something that we need to know and to understand and that is we don't have to have a seminary degree to understand the Bible, or to have really good Bible studies. We don't have to be a pastor and we don't have to have years of studying the Bible.

The best way to study the Bible and to understand what it is really saying is to ask the Bible questions. So when I read this statement, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied,*” there are two questions that pop out to me immediately. First of all, why does Jesus use ‘hunger and thirst?’ He says, ““*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,*” and He is essentially talking about desire. So why doesn't He say, ‘*Blessed are those who desire after righteousness?*’

And then He says, “*For they shall be satisfied.*” That word ‘satisfied’ is a word only used for people that eat a lot and are full. So when we go out to a restaurant, and I am not sure if this has ever happened to you, but many times when we go out to eat we fill up on appetizers and the main dish, and then the waitress comes to the table and asks, ‘*Do you have any room for dessert?*’ And I am like, ‘*I can't even think about a slice of anything sweet right now.*’ Now some people have second stomachs for dessert, right? But that's not me.

And there have been many times when I have eaten an amazing meal that I kind of want a crescendo in the final bites. Are any of the rest of you OCD like that? But I get that really good taste in the last bites of my meal. And sometimes my wife will turn to me when we are eating something and she will say, ‘*Try this.*’ And I am like, ‘*No,*’ and that is because I have this taste in my mouth and I don't want to mess it up. Am I the only weird one like that? But I just enjoy the sensation of fullness or satisfaction. So that is the first question - why use hunger and thirst?

The second question is this – why did Jesus say righteousness? Why righteousness? Think about it. He is talking about our needs and our desires. He is talking about poverty with the sayings, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, and those who are meek.*” Then He says, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied.*” And I can't help but wonder if He is talking about desire, what are the desires that we have as human beings, the things that we need? Why didn't He say, ‘*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for love, for intimacy?*’ Why righteousness?

Those are two questions that compelled me to research and think through why God used those words. And then we also have to understand that every single one of these statements, every single one of these sayings, is rooted in a previous Old Testament

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Scripture. Jesus is not preaching new ideas here. He is taking things that we know to be true, things that the audience would have known about and heard, and He is referring back to things that we would have been taught in the Scriptures before.

So Jesus' audience, when they heard, "***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied,***" they would have thought of the text we are going to spend most of our time in this morning. So knowing that, let's answer the first question – why did Jesus use 'hunger and thirst?'

I believe it is because hunger is our greatest physical urge or desire. If you think about all the physical things that your body craves, hunger and thirst beats every other one. In fact there was a psychologist that did some studies and came up with this, '*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.*' And it is a baseline of our physiological needs of food, water and shelter. If we don't get those everything else is off the table. We need those. Human beings need food, water and shelter as essential for life. And it is not just essential for our physical bodies but for our spirits and emotions as well.

So I believe Jesus was using hunger and thirst because it is a great metaphor for our greatest desire. Hunger compels us to action. Now my wife is really healthy and we eat healthy at our house. But ever since I got Covid last year I have really been on the health eating train. I am not sure how many of you have been on the health eating train, but I have been on it, and it means no meat, no dairy and no oil. I have been really focusing in on eating plant based foods.

But two weeks ago I went out to lunch with another friend for discipleship. We have doing this ever so often. He was going through some problems and he wanted to talk with me about them. Now I always try to find good places to eat, places with plant based foods. And I knew that we could eat Asian food really easy as they have a lot of plant based foods. So there is this great Thai restaurant around the corner that I think is called 'Thai House,' and I meet people there a lot for lunch.

So I was going to go there to meet my friend at noon. And it was one of those days where I had had breakfast, but about 11 o'clock I was really hungry. Do you know when you start getting hangry, there is this feeling you can get, and I was on the precipice of hangry. So on this day it was 11 o'clock which was an hour before I usually would eat, and an hour before I was going to meet my friend. So I thought I could get through the next hour knowing I was going to order my Thai style red curry dish. I knew I was going to get one of my favorite meals in just another hour, and even though I had some snack bars with me I just wanted to wait to eat anything until I got to the Thai restaurant.

So I am excited to go there to meet my friend, but also to be able to have a meal that I love. I get there and I get this text from my friend saying he was going to be late. So now I am stuck in a quandary because I am really hungry and I want to eat now. Now what is the cordial thing to do? I didn't want to order a meal and start eating before my

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friend got there but I knew I could at least order an appetizer. So I look at the menu and I see four deep fried spring rolls. They are deep fried, but I have been really good lately. So I decide I am just going to have two of them and then leave the other two for my friend when he comes.

I ordered the four deep fried vegetable spring rolls and then I ate two of them. Then I got another text from my friend saying he was still running behind. And I thought, *'Can I eat those other two spring rolls before he gets here?'* And I did! *(Laughter.)* So even though I had been trying not to eat any deep fried food I knew that my hunger had won the day.

Now all the Thai meals come with one deep fried spring roll which I normally do not eat. But I had already eaten four, *(laughter)*, and once hunger kind of takes over I just decided to have five deep fried spring rolls. And when I got home that night I had to confess my sins to my wife. *'What was I thinking? Why did I eat five deep fried spring rolls?'* But they were awesome, right? I felt bad afterwards, but the reality is that hunger makes us do things, hunger drives us to actions that normally we wouldn't do. Hunger and thirst are a motivating factor in our lives. And I don't care what kind of convictions we may have; hunger and thirst will win the day. It doesn't matter what diet we may be on, if we get hungry and we go out to eat, or go to the grocery store, we are going to buy something that is not good for us. It is just going to happen.

I believe that is why Jesus uses that verbiage. He is saying, *'Just like hunger and thirst is your greatest physical urge, I want you to hunger and thirst for something that only I can give you. The way you understand hunger and thirst, the depths of how that drives you to action, I want that same level of desire to want what only I can give you.'*

And that leads us to the second question – why does Jesus use the word 'righteousness.' Why that word? Well, He uses this word righteousness throughout the Sermon on the Mount. Again there are two groups of four statements in The Beatitudes. There are three 'Blessed' statements and then He says this, ***"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied."*** Then He has three more statements that say, ***"Blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart and blessed are the peacemakers."*** And then Jesus ends it with another final statement, ***"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake."*** So both sets of those four statements end in a statement of righteousness.

Later on Jesus says that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees. And He said we are not to practice our righteousness before men. Those two statements about righteousness are bookending this idea of what it means to live our lives not according to what man thinks, or what man's standards are, but for what God wants.

So righteousness should drive our behavior. It should begin in our hearts not just externally. And finally Jesus said righteousness is this – ***"Seek first the kingdom of God***

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and His righteousness.” I believe that just like hunger and thirst are our greatest physical urges, our greatest spiritual need is righteousness. Our greatest spiritual need is righteousness.

Maybe you are thinking but what about love? Yes, love is wonderful and great, but I will tell you that if you deal with addictions, destructive addictions in your life, you can receive all the love, care, concern, support and encouragement that you could ever want, but what you really need is to be set free from the bondage of sin. So righteousness is this ultimate craving of our soul that says, *‘Listen, no matter how much people love me, no matter what position I have attained by man’s standards, no matter what power I have, no matter what wealth I have, there are two things that every human being on the planet can never outrun. We can never outrun our guilt and we can never outrun our shame.’*

No matter what we do, no matter how many times we go to therapy, no matter how many times we drink that drink to forget or to numb ourselves, no matter how many times we get elected to something better, or we purchase something else, we cannot resolve the core issues of our soul of guilt and of shame. It is only the righteousness of God that can heal us of that.

Jesus is talking about our ultimate desires and our ultimate need, and He puts it together in this statement: ***“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied.”*** And that leads us to a passage of Scripture in the Old Testament that really expresses this in a beautiful way. Turn to Isaiah Chapter 55 and verses 1 and 2. Isaiah Chapter 55 is one of my favorite chapters in the entire Bible. Isaiah Chapter 55 is poetry, and we have to understand Hebrew poetry, just like most poetry uses artistic language to describe concrete theological terms. So some of us like to just be given the facts, you just want information. Those people are information driven. Others of us want a song. *‘Don’t you just love that song? It is so beautiful and touching.’* And the reason why songs touch our hearts in different ways is because songs are a form of poetry that gets to our soul. And people, God writes poetry.

So God writes this poem in Isaiah Chapter 55 about His desire for a relationship with His people so that they would experience Him to the fullest. We are not going to spend time in the entire chapter this morning, just the first two verses. But there is this feast that He is inviting us to, and if we are going to talk about what it means to really follow Jesus, to really pursue Him, it comes down to understanding what a feast is like. He uses this verbiage; He uses this illustrative picture of food to describe what it is like to walk with Him, to love Him, to know Him, and to live righteously.

We have to understand this is more than just a list of rules and regulations; this is a poetic form of telling us this is what it really means to love Him, what it really means to follow Him, what it really means to have His righteousness. So let’s read verses 1 and 2 and then break it down. ***“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who***

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has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."

What a beautiful way of inviting someone to a feast. And this morning I want us to think about what it means to join Jesus' feast. What does it mean to join Jesus' feast? That invitation, "***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied,***" is an invitation to us. And we see the word satisfy in verse 2 of Isaiah Chapter 55. We see this invitation to 'come.' So what does this mean? How do we join the feast of Jesus? When I think of the word 'feast' I think of a table full of food, luxurious food. And the word 'feast' comes from a Latin word that means 'joy.' So I believe that a feast represents happiness and joy together with food and people. And that is what God is inviting us into this morning.

So if we are going to join Jesus' feast, there are three steps we need to do. The first one is this – we have to be aware of the invitation. Be aware of the invitation. Four times there is an invitation in verse 1. "***Come, everyone who thirsts.***" "***Come to the waters.***" "***Come, buy and eat.***" "***Come, buy wine and milk.***" Four times there is an invitation. We need to be aware that God is inviting us a meal with Him.

Again, I think this is so fascinating because there is this invitation to join Him in food. That just got my mind working so why is there this picture of food? And it is throughout all of Scripture. "***As the deer pants for the water, so my soul pants for you.***" "***Taste and see that the Lord is good.***" In John Chapter 4 Jesus talked to the woman at the well and He told her He could give her water and she would never thirst again. In John Chapter 6 Jesus told them that He was the bread of life and if they would eat of Him they would always be satisfied.

There is this idea of food and eating as this picture of a relationship with God. And I believe one of the reasons for that is that it was food that broke our relationship with Him in the first place. The first people had harmony with God, they walked with Him in the Garden, and there was perfect fellowship and intimacy. They had paradise but they chose food to break away. They wanted to do life their own way. They wanted to be the one to determine what was right and wrong, good and evil. They wanted to have paradise apart from the authority of God in their lives.

And isn't it fascinating that even after our fellowship with God was broken, He invites us to have a meal with Him. And you will remember that there was another tree in the Garden which was the tree of life. And it is that tree that Jesus is inviting us to partake in through Him. He is inviting us to have this meal with Him.

Next I am not sure if you picked up on the paradox in this verse. What does He say? "***Come, everyone who thirsts,***" "***Come to the waters,***" "***Come, buy meat,***" "***Come,***

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buy wine and milk.” There is something unique in that He is asking you to buy something. Come to the water, come and buy this meal. He wants them to buy milk and wine. And milk and wine were not staples of the Middle Eastern diet; they were luxury items. They would have been what were only bought on special occasions, or if you were wealthy. So to tell the average person then to go buy milk and wine meant they would have to save up for months to be able to do that.

So here is this invitation to buy this rich food for those who have no money. There are two invitations to come, and then there is a statement, “*he who has no money,*” then two more invitations to “*Come, buy wine and milk,*” then another statement, “*without money and without price.*” How do you buy something when you have no money? How do you do that? You can only purchase something with no money if someone gives you the money. If someone provides for you what you lack.

And that is the essence of the gospel. This is what we understand. This is the foreshadowing of Jesus, because what we know about Jesus is this, Jesus provided His righteousness for our behalf. Remember righteousness is our greatest need. There is nothing we can do about our guilt and our shame except to trust in Jesus for His righteousness. We can’t overcome our sin, we can’t do anything to make up for the things that we have done wrong. So there is this invitation, and this is why Jesus came to live the life that we could not live. He is the only human being in the history of mankind that obeyed God’s law perfectly. He earned Heaven with His life. He was righteous.

And do you know what He did with His righteousness? He took the righteousness that He earned and He took the death that we had earned with our sins and rebellion and He exchanged it with us and for us. When Jesus was on the cross He took our sin and our condemnation and our judgment from God and He now offers to us His righteousness and His innocence. So that when we come to God in faith and accept the righteousness of Jesus by faith to be on our account, what happens is that the blood of Jesus Christ covers our sin. And when God the Father looks at us, He now sees the righteousness of Jesus and He no longer sees our unrighteousness. That is the beautiful picture of the invitation He is offering us. ‘*Come buy this righteousness that you cannot afford, but I will give it to you. I will pay the price. I will pay the price with my life.*’ So there is this invitation to come to this wonderful meal that He has for us.

I remember as a kid we would go to my Rudolph grandparents’ house for Thanksgiving up in New York. They were farmers and let me tell you farmers know how to cook. There was just something about how my grandmother could orchestrate a Thanksgiving meal with so many dishes and yet all of them would come out at the same time. She could do that. And I remember it would be about an hour before the meal was to be served when you could start smelling that food. Do you know what I am talking about? You can start smelling that food and it doesn’t matter what else is going on or what game is playing. And when my grandmother gave the okay, it was time to eat. And we just ran to the table because we were excited.

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Our parents always taught us to let the ladies and adults go first, but when that invitation came we all hurried in because we were so hungry and we knew the meal would be so good. And that is how Jesus should be to all of us. He is coming; He is offering His righteousness to us. In the depths of our sin He is saying, *'Here is the meal you have been waiting for. Here is what you have lost and you can find it again.'*

And that leads us to our second step. We have to not only be aware of the invitation but if we want to accept the invitation we have to acknowledge our hunger. We have to acknowledge our own hunger. Look at the first part of verse 2 again. It says: ***"Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?"*** See right here God is pointing out this problem. There is this invitation to come and enjoy this meal, this relationship with Him and His righteousness. Everything that we cannot earn of our own He is giving it to us without money or price, but we still have to do something. And the reason why we are not already eating with Him is because we spend our money on things that are not food, and we labor for that which does not satisfy.

Our own human tendency is to make two errors in life when it comes to really enjoying the righteousness of God and being satisfied. One error is we come up with our own standard of righteousness. We want to do things our own way. We like some of the things God said were right and wrong, but we want to come up with our own judgment system, our own standard, our own ten commandments of what is right and wrong. And that is the standard by which we want to live.

The second error is we simply have adopted God's standard for righteousness, but we are trying to earn it our own way and not through Jesus. Those are the errors we make. And when we make the error of making our own righteous standard we are spending our money. It doesn't mean that we don't have money; we have money. Remember it says you who have no money come buy and eat, but in verse 2 it says we do have money. We do have desires, we do have needs, but the problem is when left to ourselves we do not crave God on our own. Yet it is God who is the only one that can satisfy our soul.

So what we do is we fill our lives up with what we think will satisfy us. *'I will get more of this. I will get more pleasure. I will get more money. I will get more power. I will get a better job. I will get a bigger house. I will get a nicer car. I will have more free time. I will eat what I want. I will drink as much as I want. I will take this medicine. I will take this pill. I will do whatever I can to have something fill this void in my life.'* And as long as I try something it seems that I keep eating but I am never really satisfied.

I was doing some research this week on starvation and what happens to our brain when starvation takes place. I found this study that was done in 1944 by a group of scientists. They realized that Europe was dealing with massive food shortages and

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starvation and they wanted to figure out how to help Europe recover from World War II as it was winding down. So they had thirty men who volunteered to be a part of this starvation study to test what would happen to people who were starving and then how to overcome the effects of the starvation. The thirty men spent three months with a controlled diet of just the calories they needed so the scientists could understand how people acted and thought during that. Then they spent three more months studying them when they were given a calorie deprivation diet with only two very small meals a day. Then finally they were given a regular calorie intake for the next three months. And the last three months which was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, the men could eat whenever they wanted and as much as they wanted. They could really pig out the last three months which was to make up for the starvation months.

So these thirty men did this and they had their calories monitored throughout the nine months. And they found something very fascinating. In the second three months when they were starving them with only very meager portions and very bland food the men would talk about food all the time. That was all they did in their free time was talk about food. They would dream about food. They would talk about what they would eat if they could plan their next meal. Their whole time was spent thinking and talking about what they were going to eat when they could. Their lives revolved around this longing for food because there was a deficiency in their life and it consumed them.

I found this all fascinating because I believe that when it comes to our own soul cravings for righteousness, thinking *'who is going to take away my guilt and my shame? Who is going to make me acceptable? Who is going to tell me that I am all right,'* we can try every single thing that the world has to offer, but it can only be filled by Jesus. Jesus is the only one that can satisfy us. He is the only one that can fill that void. And we need to ask ourselves, *'What is it that you hunger for most? What is it that you pursue with all of your strength? When we wake up in the morning what drives your behavior?'*

Remember I said hunger drives us. What is it that drives you? Is it Christ? Is it Him? Or is it something of your own making? What happens is no matter how many times we try to fill that void in our lives with whatever it may be we will still end up hungering. We will still have that void of satisfaction in our lives. Jesus is the only one that can give true satisfaction to us.

A second way in which we can err is when we know the right standard, we know it is Jesus, we know it is through His death on the cross, and if I am really going to be honest I think this is where most of us struggle in this room today. Because how many of us when I talk about the righteousness of Christ, His death on our behalf, His life for us, when we listen to that, we know that, we might acknowledge that, we agree with that, and we might even say we believe in that, but here is the thing – how many of us are truly satisfied in the person of Jesus?

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Not how many of us believe the right things. Not how many of us can share the gospel. Not how many of us know the Bible. Not how many of us are doing our spiritual disciplines of reading our Bible and praying. But how many of us are encountering the person of Jesus Christ and we are saying *'You are enough. You are not just enough; you are the best thing in my life. I have tried everything. I have tasted sex. I have tasted money. I have tasted power. I have tasted privilege. I have tasted drugs. I have tasted alcohol. I have tasted the affection and the approval of hundreds if not thousands of people. And Jesus, 'You are it!'*

That is what He is saying. That is what we must come to. That is what we must look at in ourselves. Do we truly desire Jesus like that? There is a great song called, *'Take the world, but give me Jesus.'* Is that what our soul can say? Not what our mind can agree to, but our soul can say that because we have done that.

I love what Jesus said in John Chapter 6 and verse 35: ***"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."*** Isn't that beautiful? Man that is a promise. How many of us have tested Jesus like that? Or is it merely a theory? *'I know about Jesus. I know what He did for me. I know how to get salvation. I know all the theological proof.'* But how many of us have really come to the bread of life, taken it, and participated in what Jesus offers us, and we can truly say in our soul, *'I have tasted and seen how good you are?'* That is what we must do.

That leads us to our third step if we are going to join the feast of Jesus and that is we have to eat and delight in God's feast. Look at the last two lines of verse 2 of Isaiah 55. ***"Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."*** Here is what I have learned, and I wish I would have learned it when I was younger, as I walk with Jesus more and more, and I am still learning, growing and discovering, I have tasted Jesus and He is so good. You all know that I grew up in the church and I could look at a list of things I knew were right and wrong. And deep down I knew the right things I should do, but there was still this flesh inside of me that sometimes said, *'Yeah I know this is the right thing, but this is what is really good.'* Have you ever evaluated in your own heart the things that you know aren't right, but what you believe is good? And there is a difference there.

Jesus is asking us to align that, because this harkens back to the Garden of Eden where God said to eat what is good. God is the arbiter, He is the one who determines what is good and evil, not what you and I determine is good and evil; He is the one. And I was praying to Jesus one time about this in my walk and I actually had this verbiage come to me, *'Doing what I ask you to do, obeying me is like coming to a feast.'* God does not want us feel like we have to do what is right, *'We should pray more, we should read the Bible more, we should give more, we should go to church more, we should really be a part of a small group.'* No, no, no, stop thinking of 'should' and start thinking of *'I can't wait.'*

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I love the way the last line says, “*Delight yourselves in rich food.*” The King James Version says it like this: “*And let your soul delight in fatness.*” It is this idea of this rich food, and your soul delighting in it. This is the kind of food that is not like bread, even though fresh baked bread is very good. I am talking about the rich delicacies; I am talking about the food like you may eat on Super Bowl Sunday. This will be one of the most watched television events in our entire year. Everyone tunes in to this even though only about a third of people actually watch the game. Others will be just talking while it is on. But the main reason most people have a Super Bowl party is the food. It is the food. We want that jalapeno carved out and filled with cream cheese wrapped in bacon and roasted. (Amen.) (Laughter.)

And if you have never had one of those, go do that at least once. Listen, there are some just obnoxious foods that we eat during the Super Bowl. We don't need to eat that, but it is rich food and we want it. And God is using that illustration to describe what He is like. I think we need to understand that what the world is looking for is not all the right answers; what they are looking for is people who are satisfied. We can tell people about Jesus and we need to do that. But how many of the people that are around us are satisfied?

I remember a couple of years ago we had the ‘One Life Initiative.’ Who is close to you but far from God, and how are you inviting them into your life and being intentional with them about sharing your grace story? And maybe those people that are close to us and far from God need to see and experience the fullness and the satisfaction of life that we are experiencing with Jesus, so that they look at their own lives and realize they don't have that. And that is still an opportunity for us.

I remember when I was in middle school, and that age is a very crucial age for young people. My dad was in the ministry my entire life, and he was a youth evangelist for many years. When I was about ten he started to travel around to different churches and do these youth rallies or youth discipleship weekends. He used to always take me with him, and I remember being a middle school kid of eleven, twelve and thirteen years old going with my dad to these Friday night youth rallies, or these discipleship weekends.

We would get in the car after we were done and he would be like, ‘*Man, this serving God is so much fun.*’ And he would have had the time of his life because he enjoyed God and ministry. And when I look back at my life, I know my parents taught me well and we had family devotions. And I just want to talk to some of you parents and grandparents here, who are trying to be intentional with the discipleship of your children and passing on the faith to the next generation. Yes, they need to know the truth. Yes, they need to have boundaries. Yes, they need the structure of life. Yes, they need to come to church in an environment where they are going to be taught. But let me tell you what our children need, what the next generation needs, and what the people outside of church need, what they need to see is people who truly find their ultimate joy and

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satisfaction in Jesus. They need to be able to look at their dad and think, *'He enjoys life more than me and all of my friends. I want that.'*

We say at Life that the essence of who we are is that we want to pursue at all costs a passionate God-centered life. We say that every week. And if we are going to pursue at all costs a passionate God-centered life we must be people who have tasted the goodness of Jesus. Because if we are going to re-orient our entire life around God we must be convinced that He is the ultimate good, that He is the ultimate satisfier.

Have you done that? Have you tasted and can you testify? I have three questions to leave us with and then we are done. Number one – what are you hungering and thirsting for most? Remember, hunger and thirst is the ultimate physical desire, so what is your ultimate desire this morning? What is it that drives you? What is it that compels you to spend your time on? Is it Christ? Is it His righteousness? Is it His goodness? Is it Jesus? Or is there something else?

Number two – when will you let Jesus satisfy you? And that is an interesting word. I didn't say 'if,' I asked you 'when.' Because the invitation is real, just like God said in Isaiah Chapter 55 that we should come to Him. And Jesus said to come to the bread of life. There is an invitation at all times in every way and Jesus and the Holy Spirit is calling you to come to Him. He is calling you now. What are you waiting for? What do you have to leave behind? What do you have to repent of? What do you have to set aside and no longer pursue this? We need to taste Jesus to see if He truly does satisfy. Maybe you need to talk to Jesus and say, *'I don't know what that looks like. I don't know what that experience is like. Can you show me how to experience you this way?'* He will answer that for you.

Number three – who needs to know that fulfillment is possible? Who is it that is around you? Maybe it is your spouse. Maybe it is your kids. Maybe it is your friends. Who is it that needs to understand that fulfillment is possible and that you are the person who has that opportunity to do that?

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.