

Hunger & Thirst

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Date: 24 September 2017

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[0:00] Like us this morning to begin just a little short mini-series, contrasting or rather highlighting the sinner's need and the Saviour's fullness.

This will be the first item today. We'll be looking at different aspects of sinner's need as we go on through this very short mini-series and how this is supplied by the Lord in all his fullness.

So the sinner's need and the Saviour's fullness. And this morning we will look at the very basic requirements of hunger and thirst.

And we'll find these identified first of all in verse 33. To take an example, the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.

To then make it on, Jesus says, I am that bread of life. And then again at verse 55 where we read, my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed.

[1:02] The hunger and thirst of the sinner Jesus offers to supply with this unique kind of food and drink. But let's leave that to one side for a moment.

And recognize the very physical realities, first of all, hunger and thirst. These are not wrong things. They are things that are sort of programmed into our DNA.

They are a means by which the body tells us of need. When the body needs to be supplied again with fuel, with food or with water or whatever, it tells us that we are hungry or thirsty.

And this is a common thing. It will be a factor of us every day of our lives. We will get at some point hungry or thirsty. Unless we're constantly eating and drinking, which isn't good for us either.

Now in time of illness, of course, whether physical illness, if we're just completely unwell or bed ridden or down, or I was going to say mental illness. I don't mean mental illness in the clinical sense.

[2:04] I mean that if we're really down, if we're really depressed about something, or something psychological that's really getting us down, and we're just not ourselves, and we're just completely unwell, then we often in these circumstances, either physical illness, or when there's something mental, something in the mind, or something affecting our mood or whatever, we often in these situations have no appetite at all.

The body goes on using up its resources and reserves. But feeling no desire to eat, no hunger, no appetite, no perceived need.

But there's a reason for such loss of appetite, such absence of any hunger or thirst. And it is because we are ill. It is because we are unwell.

It's because of that that we don't have any sense of appetite. We're meant to have hunger and thirst at the appropriate times. We're meant to have our body telling us when it needs to be resupplied.

And if for any reason we go on for long periods without eating or drinking anything, but we don't feel any need, it's because we're not right. It's because we are unwell. We are ill.

[3:19] And continuance in that state of not eating, not drinking, not having the energy to do that, not having the desire to do that at all, will of course result in death.

It won't be instantaneous. It will be long drawn out. It will gradually get weaker and weaker and weaker. And perhaps we still won't have any appetite. There's a sense in which, you know, as the body or the stomach gets fed less, it does shrink.

And the requirements do diminish. So that whereas, you know, you might have eaten a great big hearty meal before just a very little will do after that. And then it diminishes more and more. And gradually you just waste away.

And the end result is death. Hunger is natural. Indeed, we must conclude it to be designed by God for our good, to encourage the regular supply of food and drink.

Thirst is, if anything, more serious than hunger. Without water, we die a lot faster than without food alone. Some kinds of food, as we know, particularly those with higher content of sugar or salt in them, absorb more of the body's fluids, natural fluids, and then they create thirst.

[4:31] And as long as you've got plenty to drink with them, then that's fine. In physical terms, then, hunger and thirst are there for a reason. They are indicative of need.

Not covetousness. Not, you know, envy. Not hunger and thirst. Desires that which is essential to its continuance of life. It's not desiring somebody else's things just for ourselves.

It's not covetousness. It's not envy. It's not sin. It's just a requirement. And hunger and thirst is telling us of a genuine need. And this is, at the physical level, true for all the creatures of God's making.

So when Jesus says, you know, elsewhere in the scriptures, you know, whoever hungers or thirsts should come to him, then, you know, he is meeting a very basic need.

He is plugging in, as it were, to something that people will recognize in terms of their physical lives and physical reality, that he means something more in addition.

[5:33] In John chapter 6, from which we read part, Jesus is talking in spiritual terms. He is, of course, talking of spiritual life and its spiritual needs.

The spiritual needs of all human beings. These needs, like their physical counterparts, are every bit as urgent as daily food and drink.

And as with the body, one is only unaware of such need, unaware of the hunger and thirst and emptiness in one's soul, having no appetite and no perceived need or desire to be fed, if and because one is seriously ill.

Now, the fact that the vast majority of the world's population are seriously ill in that point that way doesn't mean, oh no, they're the healthy ones. We are the strange ones.

If you happen to come into a country where you are the one well-fed person and everybody else is in famine situation, it doesn't mean that you're the odd one out. You're the only one who's actually getting supply. They are starving to death.

[6:42] Some of them may have become almost accustomed to the state of hunger. But if there is no perceived spiritual need, no perceived spiritual hunger or thirst, it is because one is seriously ill in one's spirit and soul.

An awful lot of people in the world, the vast majority, are in this way, seriously ill, seeing no needs, no point in spiritual food or drink and having no desire for it.

And as with the body, continuance in such a state will result in death. It won't be instantaneous. It won't drop dead that second, that day, whatever, but gradually, little by little, the soul grows cold. It goes not just lack of hunger, lack of thirst, it becomes dead to the things which could save it. So continuance in this state will assuredly result in death, just as sure as the body, if it ignores the times of hunger and thirst and so on, will likewise die.

Not only so, but without any such spiritual element to one's life, we become effectively no different to the beasts of the field. Who, yes, they physically hunger and thirst, they have to feed, they have to graze, they need water, they physically can drink, but they have no spiritual dimension to their lives.

[8:09] In all these nature wildlife programs, you don't see the prides of lions or gatherings of zebras, all sort of gathering around to worship. A little pile or a tree or something while one of the zebras leads them or another animal, whether they're apes or whether any giraffes or any other kind of creatures, they don't gather to worship.

Dogs and cats and mice and all these, they don't worship, they don't have a spiritual element to their lives. They have a life force, they have breath in their life.

The Bible tells us that they have a spirit in a sense, but that spirit is little more than the life and the breath of their own body. You know, when we read in Ecclesiastes, in chapter 3, verse 8, I said, I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts. Even one thing befalleth them as that one dieth, so dieth the other. Yea, they have all one breath. So that a man hath no preeminence above a beast, for all his vanity, all go into one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of a beast that goeth downward to the earth? There's a reference to the spirit of a beast and to the spirit of man.

[9:31] But this beast doesn't have a spiritual dimension in the sense of a soul to its life. It doesn't worship, it doesn't engage with any deity, even a false deity, never mind the true God.

And yet, all the creatures of God's creation are made to glorify him. They live their lives, they end their lives, they die, they go to the dust. Man without the spiritual dimension in his life is in earthly terms no different to the beast of the field.

He eats, he drinks, he lives, he dies. Of course, there is more than that. Man has a soul, an immortal soul, which if it dies, doesn't just die with the body, it goes on in eternal death forever and ever.

It is a serious business for man to neglect or to be unaware of the emptiness, the hunger, the thirst in his soul.

Now, Jesus addresses the spiritual needs of his hearers and says that he himself is the supply of their needs.

[10:39] Now, in doing so, of course, he is making God accessible to people. He is making God right down amongst where they are, coming to meet them where they are.

But this very familiarity, this is what caused some people to turn against him. They said, well, this can't be, this can't be something from heaven. This is Jesus. We know who Jesus is.

We know his mother. We know who his father was. He cannot be from heaven. Of course, they themselves don't know anything about the virgin birth and the way that Christ is conceived in the womb of the virgin by the Holy Ghost and so on.

But time and time again, Jesus makes reference to his heavenly father and he has come from heaven. But this very familiarity makes people think it can't be that simple. You see, people to an extent like to have God at a distance.

They like to have God mysterious. They like to have him far away and beyond their understanding so that they can tell themselves, well, it's too much for me to understand.

[11:44] I can't possibly do anything about it. I can't be responsible for my spiritual need being met. You know, God's way beyond me. Who am I to engage with the Almighty? Who am I to understand what God says or does?

So at the end of the day, I can't be held responsible. God is way up there. I'm down here. Well, I do my best, of course, and I try hard but, you know, that's as much as I can do. God does not leave us in that condition.

God does not want to be distant from us. When God created man, male and female, he made them in his own image and he made them for fellowship, for relationship with himself.

God himself exists in relationship in a trinity, Father, Son, Holy Ghost. God created man, male and female, in his own image, intending that there would be, in a sense, three parts to that relationship. There would be the man, there would be the woman, there would be God. God is meant to be at the heart of every marriage. God is meant to be at the heart of every relationship.

[12:57] God is meant to be in the spirit and soul of every man and woman. That is how we were created. That is for what we were created.

God did not intend to be distant from us. Man sinned against God and fell from that unique relationship. And as a result, we have been separated from God ever since.

Now that is what death is, separation. Ultimately, separation from God. And in hell, if we end up in hell, we are eternally separated from God.

And that is the definition of ongoing death of hell, separation from God. But God did not intend or design that this should be the case. God desires to make himself accessible, to feed the hunger in man's soul.

A hunger of which he may not yet even be aware. A thirst which he didn't know that that's what it was in his soul, in his heart.

[14:02] Jesus comes and makes God accessible to address the spiritual needs of his hearers. These needs, like their physical counterparts, are every bit as urgent as daily food and drink.

And as with the body, one is only unaware of such need if and because one is seriously ill.

Jesus then addresses the spiritual needs of his hearers, that he himself is the supply of their needs. Jesus said, verse 35, I am the bread of life.

He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. Verse 33, the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and give life unto the world.

Verse 55, my flesh is meat indeed, my blood is drink indeed. Now he's not talking about cannibalism here. He's not talking about physically drinking blood or physically eating flesh. [15:06] He's talking about he himself was come in the flesh being the supply of all man's spiritual needs. Now he talks about blood here, blood we know to be, not only as the Old Testament tells us, that the life of a creature is in its blood, but if you think of, you know, how the advances in science have made known to us all that there is in blood, the huge amount of power and nutrition, and all the elements that go into human blood.

Why do you think midges and flies and clags and everything are so desperate to suck it out of you? Because one minuscule little drop of your blood will supply all the nutrition they need for ages. If you get a little pinprick of blood, a little smear of blood, and somebody gets their finger and wipes it off and puts it on a slide under a microscope, and you look at it, they've got your DNA right there, they've got your entire identity, your unique personhood, as it were, is containing that tiny little smear of blood that they can look at, it's all there.

This song suggests he's calling what Jesus means, he says, you know, drink my blood, my DNA, my personhood, my humanity, that which is of God, that which will enter into you, will fill the void, the hunger, the thirst, which is in your soul, whether you know it or not.

It is a spiritual need Jesus is addressing, and he is using the illustration of physical terms. And of course, last Lord's Day, as you know, we partook of the Lord's Supper, the bread, the wine, was broken and poured out, symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood, just as he said.

[17:03] We don't physically eat on a physical Christ, but we spiritually partake of these physical symbols that point us to Christ, that testify that this is the one upon whom we are feeding, feeding our hunger, feeding our thirst.

Ah, yes, okay, fine spiritual needs, right, that's all well and good. But, you know, this is the problem, this is the problem that a person of the world has, because, you know, they are so much concerned with paying their bills and meeting their appointments and fulfilling all the demands of time.

They've got to get to feed their families, they've got to get physical food in the larder, they've got to get physical drink and physical things, we've got our daily needs, we've got our bodily needs, these things are urgent, it's all very well, there's pie in the sky when you die, but what about now?

What about the real world? Jesus is talking in spiritual terms, let's see and do something for our physical, present needs, then maybe we could listen. What about the pressing physical needs of our bodies and our earthly lives?

Well, of course, Jesus addresses that too, doesn't he, when he says in the Sermon of the Mount, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.

[18:21] Therefore, take no thought saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or wherewithal shall we be clothed? but after all these things do the Gentiles seek? He didn't just mean non-Jewish people, he meant unbelievers in that context, heathens, those who worship other gods, they're obsessed with the world and with the flesh and with meaning they immediately hunger and thirst and food and clothing and all these things.

Your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But he says take no thought about them. It isn't me, I'm not just ignore them, go around naked and never eat and drink anything else in the world.

No, he means as sometimes if you've got a pressing matter of business or whatever, let's say you discuss it in a meeting or something and someone says well I've got to do this, this and this, say right, okay, leave that with me, you do this, this and this, leave that with me and I'll deal with it.

And you don't want to say oh yeah but I've got to do it too, I've got to roll up my sleeves and get involved in the bit you're doing, no, leave that with me. You do your but I'll do my bit here. This is like what God is saying, he's not saying ignore your needs, he's saying leave that with me.

I will supply your needs, I will make sure you have enough. I may not necessarily give you as much riches and abundance and worldly wealth that you might think, you decide I'll give you what you need.

[19:36] You will have everything you need to put your trust in me. Take no thought for these things, leave it with me. Seek first the kingdom of God, a supply of our needs as offered by Christ is not an instead of.

He's not saying, well think of these spiritual things and then it won't matter that you don't have any food, then it won't matter that you're dying of thirst and you put no roof over your head and no clothes to put on and so on because you'll be so spiritual these things won't matter. He doesn't say that at all. He knows that his heavenly father created people with body and soul. He knows that there is a physical need, the body, the temple, of the spirit. Likewise, the body has its needs just as the soul has its needs. Christ does not ignore these physical requirements. Remember, it's him that fed the 5,000 and told Peter to cast down his nets on the other side and he's gathering full of fish and so on. He's always ready to supply our physical needs. Your children have eaten any meat. No, we'll cast it on the other side. And then he says, come and die. He's already prepared bread and fish for them on the seashore.

[20 : 47] He's always one step ahead of us. He knows your needs. He knoweth our frame, says in the psalm, doesn't it? He remembereth that we are dust.

He supplies our needs. the needs that Christ offers to fill are not an instead of, but an as well as, and a better than, all when the world can afford us.

There will come a time when we hunger and thirst no more, if we are in Christ. We are taught in Revelation 7, verses 16 and 17, they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light in them, nor any heat, for the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Will we eat and drink in heaven? Yes, we will. We will be hungry and thirsty in heaven, no we won't. We won't eat and drink for hunger and thirst, we'll just eat and drink at the banqueting table for the sheer joy of it, because that's what the Lord has laid up for those that love him. And from heaven itself to us here upon earth, the promise is given while yet there is time. In Revelation 21, verses 4 to 6, God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

[22 : 09] There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. The things which were the symptoms of our fall, of this fallen world, will be passed away, because everything will have been healed, everything will have been made new.

He that sat upon the throne said, behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, write for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, it is done, I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end.

I will give unto him that is a thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Now he's not offering that to those in heaven, and this is an offer made from heaven to those of us on earth. These words have been written down so that we can read them on earth, so we can understand that God desires to supply all of our meat. Likewise, in chapter 22 verse 17, the spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is a thirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

You don't pay God for the privilege. You don't pay God for the blessings he desires to give you. And the things that he desires to supply are not just sort of, you know, your basic fundamental, you know, no frills, get a beer bread, beer water sort of thing.

[23 : 32] What the Lord offers is no mere subsistence, but abundance. And we've got ample evidence of that from the scriptures. If we think we mentioned the feeding of the 5,000 a minute ago, you know, what did they start with?

You know, two fish, five loaves of bread, or 5,000 men plus the women and children. So probably about 9,000, 10,000 people there. And he feeds them all. 12 baskets of leftovers gathered up, feeding 4,007 baskets gathered up.

There is such abundance that God gives. When he gives the wine at Cana of Galilee and he turns the water into wine, he didn't say, well, here's an extra couple of bottles. about 120 gallons, it translates into, of the best quality, sweet, rich wine that the master of the feast says, you've watched the best in for now.

This is a fantastic wine you've got here. 120 gallons of it. It's abundance and it's richer and sweeter and fuller than anything the world can afford us.

God doesn't just give bare subsistence. He gives quality and he gives riches. Think of what it says in the song, I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

[24 : 53] He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. Thy love is better than wine.

And then again in verse 4, we will remember thy love more than wine. The upright love thee.

Chapter 7 at verse 9, the roof of thy mouth is like the best wine for my beloved that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

It's riches, it's fullness, it's sweetness, it's the blessing and the abundance of God's table for joy and for blessing. We sang earlier over the children in Psalm 104, you know, in verse 13 onwards, you see when it says, he watereth the hills from his chambers, the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.

The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of leaven, which he hath planted. God doesn't do anything by us. If we have a hunger and a thirst in our soul, and God desires to fill it, that is how we have been created, with this emptiness inside, and you'll notice that man is constantly trying to fill that emptiness with anything but God, anything but the truth, the devil will tell him, all religions are just the same, go after eastern mystical religion, burn some incense sticks in front of a Buddha statue, or investigate Islam, and Hinduism, and all these, they're all just as valid, he will tell him to fill that void with anything, whatever works for you, it's fine, it won't be, just like you could eat, you can eat any amount of sweets, and crisps, and stuff that may fill you up temporarily, but it won't nourish your body, it won't fill the void within, it won't build you up, the Lord desires us to have the good food of his word and his spirit, the sweetness of his supply, there is the sinner's need, and there is the saviour's fullness which he longs to give us, the supply of Christ is rich and sweet and good and having tasted and seen that the

[27 : 30] Lord is good, the first thing we have to do is lay hold on that for ourselves while it is freely offered to us, we have to recognise that yes, our soul is empty, there is something that is missing, there is that which causes everything, there must be more to life than this, what is the meaning of life, why are we here, what is the purpose, the Lord supplies that hunger, he fills that emptiness, he satiates and quenches that thirst, he gives us all that we could desire, and if you don't believe me, then follow the advice of Jesus, who said to his first disciples, come and see, try it, taste and see that the Lord is good, and have him tasted and see, part of what we are called to do is to let others know where and from whom the supply of their needs can be met, allowing for the fact that they may not yet be aware of need, aware of any hunger or thirst because as yet they are spiritually ill, and when you're spiritually ill, you don't have this appetite, you're not conscious of being hungry or thirsty or empty because it's all you've ever known, they have no appetite, and they are slowly dying, now if you have the means to help somebody who is dying, you've got to do it, you can't say, oh well, that's their right to just let themselves die slowly and so on, what about giving them the option, what about giving them the medicinal help and the sustenance that as yet they don't know that they need,

Jesus is that the one who alone supplies our great need, part of our function then is to be as it were an appetizer for others, now if you think about what an appetizer is, you go to a restaurant or something like that, maybe you know, usually, I don't know what you, but usually when you have a restaurant, you make your restaurant reservation for me to make you normally eat your own tea between half five six, that sort of time, but if you're going to rest, you make it maybe seven, or half seven, maybe you get the kids to put to bed or something else, other things to sort out, so it's a little bit later, but by then you know, you're getting a little bit hungry, so what do they do, they come out first of all with a great big plump of a course and say tuck into that, no, they start with something little, they'll start with a little appetizer, start with a wee bowl of soup or a wee canopy or something like that, something which once you've eaten it, you'll think yes, that's very nice, but now I just feel even more hungry, a wee appetizer is designed to stimulate the hunger pacts, you might have been managing okay, but then you eat a wee bit, and then oh, change in, there's a hungry wee word, that's the purpose of an appetizer, and by definition it must be a small portion, now if somebody is ill, you think of somebody in their bed being fed or something like soup, you know, just a spoonful at a time, just a wee wee bit, maybe a wee crumb of bread, they can't shovel a whole plate full of solid food down their throat, they'll be sick, they can't take it, you're going to do little by little, little at a time, that's what we have to do in terms of our witness, in terms of our personal evangelism, little by little, just the odd word here, a little conversation there, just a quiet little thing, well this is what

I believe, whatever everybody else might say, you know, this is my faith, and you have yours, but this is what I believe, and this is why I believe it, just simple, little, gentle, small portion, appetizer, to stimulate the hunger, to stimulate the desire, the purpose of an appetizer is to initiate the beginnings of appetite, and some foods do that, usually in small doses, you know, you put the can of pieces, you get the appetizers, some foods likewise, create thirst, and that too, I would suggest to you, is part of what we are intended by God to do, some foods create thirst, and our purpose, when we have laid hold upon Christ, and recognised that his desire to supply our needs, is not an instead of, to the ordinary needs of our daily lives, he will supply all those too, and much better than we ever imagined, but what he really wants to give us is that which will last eternally, and yes, enable us to that, you'll meet all your activities along the way, don't you worry about those, leave those with God, take no thought for those, trust them for those, but what he really wants to give you is the big deal, the big feast, the big banquet, the eternal one, the lasting one, that which will fill the gap, the hole, the hunger in your soul, and leave you satisfied, and quenched in your thirst, and yet desiring more, and our purpose, thus supplied, is to enable others to come and find what we ourselves have found, some fruits, create thirst, thirst, perhaps that is one reason why Jesus said to his followers, ye are the salt of the earth.

Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.