

To hunger and thirst and be filled, we understand it because staying alive depends on it.

I'm the first to admit that this Thursday, I will hunger and thirst around the Thanksgiving table, with the smells and tastes of turkey and dressing, sweet potato casserole, good old-fashioned green bean casserole, pecan pie, pumpkin pie.

We know what it means to be more than filled, more than enough, Thanksgiving!!!!

Yet, as the man says, “not so fast, my friend.”

Eugene Petersen in his interpretation of this Beatitude puts it this way, “You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's the food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat”

And, note the Beatitude doesn't say blessed are those who are righteous, but blessed are those of us who hunger and thirst for this righteousness.

Hunger and thirst for righteousness: how does our life depend on it, just how appetizing is it really?

Because Jesus says, “Those who have and will continue to have a craving, a powerful desire, a life or death need for righteousness will be filled.”

What does righteousness taste like? smell like?

There's a story of a nun cleaning the wound of a soldier. A reporter walks by and says: I wouldn't do that for a million dollars.

The nun says, “Neither would I.”

Righteousness, it seems, is what we hunger and thirst for when others are hungry and thirsty.

How is it, though, that this satisfies us: our hunger, our thirst?

Because when you are hungry, really hungry, all you care about is getting something to eat. When you are thirsty, all you care about is getting something to drink.

So how does hunger and thirst for righteousness fill us to where we know the blessing, a sense of more than enough for everyone, the true giving of thanks?

Remember Mary's song, Jesus' mother in the second chapter of Luke offers praise to God, what we call the Magnificat.

She says that God “*has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed...*”

And she sings of how God “*has filled the hungry with good things...*”

Maybe, just maybe, Jesus remembers his Mother telling him her story.

As a handmaid, she said, one who was empty, like those who are poor in spirit, who are meek, she was filled.

Maybe Jesus heard his mother talk about how in the midst of the turbulence that roared around her, she found a final calm that came from faith in God; maybe she talked about how she and Joseph grew more confident that God was with them every step of the way as they journeyed to Bethlehem, and from that grew a great courage and gladness.

Jesus knew a woman who was empty and had been filled with good things, who was blessed.

And Joseph. Matthew tells us all we know about Joseph, that when he found out that Mary was pregnant, “*being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.*”

That's all Matthew thought we needed to know about Jesus' earthly father. He was a righteous man.

Maybe Jesus heard Joseph talk about how all he wanted to do was make sure Mary was cared for, how they had been given, how he and Mary had

moved from their time of prayer, their time of hearing God speak, how they had been filled with a peace beyond understanding and then been able to stand together and look steadily upon their world without panic.

Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to put her to public disgrace, doing the right thing, integrity...Jesus knew a man who was righteous.

Jesus grew up with two people who had been blessed and who had shown him the blessing of God's righteousness, who I believe by word and deed showed him what it means to cherish others in the manner of God.

To hunger and thirst for righteousness is the diet fed to Jesus by Mary and Joseph.

What Jesus saw in Mary and Joseph, what he heard in their story was all about meeting needs.

A hunger and thirst that offers healing, love, acceptance, and forgiveness without condemnation, just as they had received from God.

Righteousness looks upon people as being cherished by God, or as Jesus says to love one another as he has loved us.

And just like hungering and thirsting for food can get messy, so too this hunger and thirst for righteousness can get messy,

Loving Jesus is messy.

It requires taking everything about us: our habits, our culture, our customs, our privileges, and putting them to the measure of Jesus.

Let me be clear. It is easier not to love Jesus.

After all, loving Jesus means that we need to love the people that Jesus loves. It means taking their interests to heart.

To hunger and thirst for righteousness, to live on the diet by which Jesus lived means giving up on the idea that we are more special than others. Serving up righteousness is a messy dish.

Just look at the stories Jesus told. It means extending a hand to assist a bleeding stranger who might be diseased.

It means standing in the middle of the road looking for a wayward son and hugging him home with the best party ever.

Just look at Jesus himself. It means widening our circle of care.

He took lepers, the lame, blind and poor along with every other kind of sinner there is and prepared a table for them in the presence of their enemies.

All in all, an appetite for God involves other people and righteousness is not always that appetizing, because sometimes they smell like sin and taste like bad apples in the bunch.

It means setting aside fear of those who are different. It means looking at others as created in the image of God, our equals in the eyes of God.

To work up this appetite for God is when we know our need for each other; for the gift that each of us can receive of another person who needs our help through trouble, illness, bitterness, doubt, or grief.

For God desires good for all God's creatures, to satisfy our hunger not just for food, but for freedom, truth, justice, and love.

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," the best meal from the God of all blessings.

So just how appetizing is it?

I would say we will be filled with a blessing that is 'divinely delicious'!

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.