

Trinity United Methodist Church

January 12, 2020

“Bless This Home: Hunger & Thirst”

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Scripture: Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Sermon

Would you pray with me? Oh Lord, open our ears and our hearts. Let us hear what we need to hear and show us what we need to do to become more faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His name we pray, amen.

Last week, if you were here, I introduced the theme verse for the year for us here at Trinity. Anybody remember what it is? *Seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* So we're going to be exploring that verse on Communion Sundays, the first Sundays of the month, that's Communion Sunday in the sanctuary. We'll be exploring that verse together through the course of the year. I invite you to take that home, commit it to memory, and see how we might live that out together.

Today we begin a new series that's related to that theme verse of seeking first the kingdom and God's righteousness, as we begin a new series called *Bless This Home*, and it's based on the Beatitudes.

I once knew a Pentecostal pastor. He said his daughter brought home the first boyfriend, and he looked at him and said, “Nice to meet you. Do you know the Ten Commandments? The boy said no, and he said, “Here's a Bible. Go in that room right there and don't come out until you can memorize all ten.” Didn't tell him where to find them in the Bible or anything. So the second boy she brought home, she got wise. “Nice to meet you. You know the Ten Commandments?” “Yes, sir!” And he rattled off all ten. He said, “Great! You know the Beatitudes?” “Uhh...no, sir.” “Here's a Bible. Go in that room right there. Don't come out until you can memorize them.”

So, do you know the Beatitudes? That is the question. If you are still holding on to your New Year's resolutions this year, many of them center around some aspect of our

home life that we live in our households. And it's safe to say, I would think, that we all want our households, our homes, to be blessed in 2020 and beyond, right? Do you want your home to be cursed? We indeed want our homes to be blessed, although "blessed" is not often the first word that you would think of when you look at some families and some households, maybe even our own. Very ironic how I'm preaching this sermon today, based on what's been going on in *our* household this morning.

Often our households are on the struggle bus mightily. Often we are stressed beyond belief. We are going through some issues large or small, and sometimes we even wonder, *Are we going to make it? Are they going to make it to age 18?* (Laughter) And if you don't know what I'm talking about, go people watching. Pay attention the next time you go to Walmart or to the mall or wherever people gather. As I said before, you ever wonder why posing for family pictures in the portrait studio feels so awkward, when they have you pose all unnaturally, and especially to place your hand "lovingly" on your spouse's shoulder, or to wrap your arm around them from behind. Who does that stuff in real life? Come on! That's not us! Maybe a hand around each other's necks, that's more like it! And if you still don't know what I'm talking about, just put a nanny cam in the parsonage, and you will see that our family puts our pants on just like anybody else, in more ways than one.

Then there's the fact that in today's world, families and households are made up in so many different ways. There are households without children. There is an increasing number of blended families and all the complexities that go into that. There are an increasing number of single-parent households, whether by choice or not. There are multiple generations that live under one roof, which is not uncommon for other parts of the world, like Kim talked about this morning, but it seems to be increasing here, as more and more parents and adult children live together in the same home.

There is nothing wrong at all with those and other ways that homes are made. I'm just pointing out that when we think of "home," it's not always mom and dad and the 2.3 children plus the cat and/or dog. And some of you might be thinking, "Well, wait a minute. Don't be rushing me, here. I'm loving the single life. I'm still a student, or a kid." Well, this is the time for those folks to be thinking about what kind of home they might want to build with somebody someday.

I want my home to be blessed, and I'm sure that you want the same for your home. And Jesus actually taught about the types of people and the characteristics of those who God would bless, in Matthew chapter 5, that begins the Sermon on the Mount. And over this series over the next few weeks, we're going to look at how we can apply some of these directly to our households.

And so in Matthew chapter 5, verse 6, Jesus says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” What does He mean by righteousness? He means *holiness*. To be set apart, to be holy as God is holy. Jesus said, be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. And we think, What? Our households, perfect? But it’s perfection in love and holiness.

Later in this same unit of teaching, lest we think that this is beyond our grasp here in this life, Jesus point blank says, “Ask, and it *will* be given to you. Seek, and you *will* find.” Now the problem is that so many families in our world today are starving and thirsty not just physically, although often quite opposite the case. But we’re starving and thirsting spiritually. We crave the things that are satisfied by temptation. And we end up stuffing ourselves with spiritual junk food that only leads to more cravings.

Craig Groeschel of Life.Church says we’re not as blessed as we could be because we’re not hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for right living. For doing the right thing and living to please God by faith and by the way we live. It goes back to those New Year’s resolutions; if you want to improve your relationships, your parenting, your finances, your self—who are you ultimately trying to please in those things? In your home, who or what are you really hungering for? In your life and whatever family looks like for you, whether that be a group of friends and roommates or whatever, what are you pursuing? What matters most to you?

There’s a few ways to tell. For instance, what’s on your Hulu or Netflix “recently watched” list? Ha ha. Did you hear that? Somebody said, “Uh-oh.” What’s on your bank statement? What’s on your internet browsing or Google search history? Uh-oh. What do you post on social media? Do you try to project a certain image, and what image are you projecting without even realizing it?

If we’re like most people in our culture today, if we’re really honest with ourselves, I bet that to some degree or another over the last week, we have been doing *something* other than pursuing God. Putting many things above Him, and not hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Some people say, “Come on, really? We gotta do that *all* the time?” Yes. All the time.

So what do we do? If we hunger after too much sugar, now that we’ve binged on it around Christmas, we’ve got to change our appetites, don’t we? *Despite* it being Girl Scout cookie time. You see what they do to us? You ever give up a certain food for long enough that when you have it again, it doesn’t taste as good as you remember it tasting? There was a period when I tried cutting McDonald’s out of my life so much. Then when I went back and had some of those delicious golden fries that I loved, when I first ate them again—meh, they didn’t taste so great. Now I’m back in the habit, and whatever. Soda. We might give that up for a while, then have it again and ooh, wow,

that's more sweet, almost too sweet, than what we remember. The recipe is still the same. It's our appetite that changes.

And here's the thing. If we start pursuing God and we start *seeking* God, then we're going to see the benefits of walking and being led by the spirit of God, being empowered by His presence and His spirit, and we'll find ourselves longing for more of God and less of that junk that we used to fill ourselves up with. The stuff that distracted us and wasn't good for us and didn't satisfy us to begin with. Because we develop an appetite not for those things, but for God. If we're hungering and thirsting for righteousness, we are filled and satisfied as we're knowing and serving and doing the will of God.

And so how, practically, can we do these things in our households? We have to model discipleship. Behavior is more *caught* than it is *taught*. If you want to see any examples of that, just look at your kids and how much they're like you, for better or worse. I remember my buddy Carl—I'll talk about him again in a minute. He was staying with us one time and I got after Chloe for something, and Carl said, "Shut up! She's just like you!" I said, "Shut up, Carl." I've said that to Carl many times, actually. Anyway, behavior is more caught than taught. We have to let our family and friends see us pray, read Scripture, singing along to Christian radio.

And there's three specific ways I think we can create more hunger for God in our homes. The first is, involve God in your daily conversations. And often it's just a matter of changing your vocabulary just a little bit. For instance, instead of looking around and saying, "Wow. How lucky are we that we get to live in this house, or how lucky are we that we get to go on this awesome vacation, or how lucky are we that we came into some extra money, surprisingly." Instead of saying how *lucky* we are, change your vocabulary a little bit and say, "Wow. Look how God has blessed us. Look at all these blessings that we have from God in our lives." Just that little change.

Instead of saying things like, "Ugh. I *have* to go do laundry." Or, "Ugh, now we *have* to do the dishes." Or, "Ugh, now I *have* to go out and rake leaves or mow the lawn," or whatever the case might be. Change your vocabulary a little bit and say, "Hey, now that we've eaten, we *get* to do the dishes, because thank God, we had food to put on these dishes to dirty them up to begin with." Or, "Hey, we *get* to go do laundry, from which we have too many clothes that we never even wear all that we have, anyway." Or, "We *get* to spend time in God's creation by raking leaves and mowing the lawn," or whatever the case might be. Change that vocabulary from "I *have* to," to "I *get* to."

When it comes to deciding as a household on what to do, should we do this or that, and it's a pretty big decision. Whatever the decision might be, instead of simply listing out the pros and cons, involve your family, and especially let them hear you

praying and asking God, “God, what do *You* want us to do?” Involve God daily in your conversations, to create more hunger for God in your home.

Secondly, *make worship non-negotiable*. Make worship non-negotiable. If they see you making excuses or dreading getting up and going to church—If they see you making excuses, whether it be the weather, or sports, or “family time”—so many families that I see out and about, “Hey, I haven’t seen you in a while. We miss you in church.” “Oh, yes, well, Sundays are our *family time*.” Well, get your butts in church and spend your family time in church, for crying out loud! Right?

Proverbs chapter 22, verse 6, says, “Train up a child in the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.” And this played out in my life as I went off to Virginia Tech, was four hours away from Mom and Dad getting my butt out of bed and dragging me to church on Sunday morning. And I took full freedom of that, but I still felt guilty because I knew that I was supposed to be going to church. And over the course of my college life, I did get more involved in Blacksburg United Methodist Church, because worship was non-negotiable growing up.

My buddy Carl, who is a United Methodist pastor—he’s nuts. They have guests over quite a bit. He’s got a large family. And one Sunday morning in January, it was below freezing out, and the guests that were in the house said, “Well, you go do your church thing. We’re just going to stay here and chill at your house with coffee and whatever. He said, “Oh, no. That’s not an option in this household. You’re leaving the house. I won’t force you to go to worship with me, but nobody gets to stay at home on Sunday morning. You can sit on the front porch if you want to and we’ll let you back in when church is over.” And that’s what they did. But worship was non-negotiable. Carl is unique.

Make worship non-negotiable to create more hunger for God in your home.

But then thirdly, show them how seeking and serving God is actually fun. Bishop Pennel, our Bishop when I was growing up, he was at Annual Conference one year and said, “Why do we Christians walk around looking like a bunch of sad dorks all the time?” And I would add, either that or we walk around and we’re known more by our anger and who and what we’re *against* than who and what we’re *for* and known for our joy. We have to set the example, again. If our household sees us dreading getting up and going to church on Sunday morning, then guess what? They will, too. If our household sees us dreading serving God in some other aspect in the life of the church or serving God in general—“Ugh, why do we have to do *that*?”—then guess what? They will do the same.

And it’s not just that. Also, we can reinforce the fruit of the spirit that we see in others in our household. “Hey, that was a really kind thing that you did today. I’m proud of you for doing that.” Or, “Hey, wow. You’re especially joyful this morning after we’ve

all been to church together. Look at that!” That’s what I’m praying for today, anyway. So reinforce that fruit of the spirit that you see.

Involve God in your daily conversations, make worship non-negotiable, and show how seeking and serving God is fun, are just some ways that we can create more hunger for God in our households. Because face it, living counterculturally like this is hard. We’ve all got stresses and problems and issues that we live with in our personal lives and in our households and our families. Often it’s one step forward and two steps back.

We’re talking about getting Financial Peace University going again. Some of y’all have been through that. We’ve been through that in previous churches. It’s abbreviated FPU, but I’ve talked with some church people about it. You know, you try to get the savings going and then the next bill comes in and whatever, and often there’s no “P” in FPU when it comes to money. Right? But it is, it’s often one step forward, two steps back. When we try to kick a bad habit is when we crave it the most.

When we start hungering and thirsting for righteousness, there are forces at work that will try to fill us with junk instead. And my family definitely knows this all too well. There are plenty of times that we are ready to throw up our hands, thinking our home is anything but blessed, because we are all laying hands on each other and it’s not in the name of Jesus, let’s put it that way. We’re tired, we’re cranky, no one is listening... But you know what? We are blessed. Right, honey? We are blessed. We’re not blessed in some super “too blessed to be stressed” kind of way. We are far from perfect. But we really do believe that when it comes down to it, *any* home can be blessed, as we have experienced what God wants for us when we pursue Him and we hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Thanks be to God. Amen.