

“Finding Joy in Hunger”



Luke 4:2b-4

He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’4:4 Deut. 8:3” (NIV)

Special Music: “Hungry” Kathryn Scott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-9ALZrds-o>

Lord, Keep Me Hungry

**I am grateful, Lord
That you meet my needs
I feel secure
When you comfort me
I am blessed
That you keep me warm
Calm the storm
And stave off harm
But Lord, keep me hungry**

**I'm happy
With my belly filled
I am pleased
With Your peace instilled
I'm glad
That when my thirst is quenched
My hands unclenched
My soul is drenched
But Lord, Keep me hungry**

**I need my hunger
To seek your way
I need my hunger
So that I don't stray
I need my hunger
To seek your face**

To find my place
To accept your grace
So, Lord, keep me hungry

Hunger is demanding. It starts out with a nagging little tingle and then a grumble, and as it builds, it becomes more and more demanding. Hunger needs to be satisfied or it will continue to be demanding. It can temporarily be ignored. It can temporarily be pushed aside. It can be temporarily avoided. But it will not go away. It will continue its demand to be filled. And even when it is satisfied, it is only a matter of time before it returns. Hunger is our body's gas gauge telling us that we are running low on fuel and that we need to replenish our tanks.

We associate hunger with our need for food because our bodies are harder to ignore than our minds or our souls. But in truth, we hunger for many things and based on what is important to us in life, our hungers may vary as individuals. We can have a hunger for respect, fulfillment, love, education, information, money, security, peace, communion, value, grace, mercy and so many other things. But it should also be noted that in order to have a hunger for something in particular, we have to at least have had a small taste of that something to know that we want more. How can we hunger for something that we have never experienced? And that experience can come through what we see in others and that brings out a different kind of hunger known as envy. Sometimes we hunger for something because we see that others have it and we don't.

And, if we do control our hunger, then we find that hunger takes on new forms in the way of greed and avarice which can then lead to gluttony. Gluttony being the desire that we don't know how to stop wanting something and that can easily take us into the realm of overindulgence. And overindulgence creates consequences that we are seldom prepared for in mind, body and soul.

But hunger, in and of itself, is not the problem. Hunger is a motivator. It is what tells us that we need to do something, to achieve something in order to satisfy something in our lives whether it is fuel for our bodies, fuel for our minds, or fuel for our souls. Hunger is telling us that we need to be fed; that we are lacking something that is necessary for us to grow. Without it, we will be unable to continue our journey in life.

Let's look at our scripture again for this week.

Luke 4:2b-4

He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'" (NIV)

Last week, we talked about how Christ had been led by the spirit on this journey of 40 days in the wilderness in preparation for His ministry to come. And as a culmination to this journey, he has an interaction with Satan. When we had our

series on Spiritual Essentials, we talked about how science has shown that the human body can go for approximately 40 days without food. We know that the human side of Christ was really pretty much at the limit with regards to being without food. And we can see that Satan knew and saw it as an opportunity. He waited until the temptation was absolutely at its greatest point; a time when it was no longer about filling the belly, but actually at a point where the a man's survival instinct kicks in.

But Satan also acknowledges, in the most subtle of ways, the duality of Christ as both fully God and fully man. It is the human side of Christ that he appeals to with regards to hunger, but it is the God side of Christ that he appeals to for a solution. Because of the deity of Christ, there was never any need for Him to be hungry other than to show us how to live beyond our limits. And, while Satan is correct that that Jesus could simply turn the stones into bread, He really could have done that at any time along His journey. He did not have to wait until this moment. But He did. And He did it to prove a point.

The point was never about Jesus' physical hunger other than to show us that He was fully human, and that the temptation was real. It was never about how He could feed that hunger. It was always about the point that there is so much more to this life than meeting our own physical needs; that we need to prioritize to our hungers. Like we mentioned last week, each one of the temptations has a lesson

and meaning behind it that needs to be explored. It is never temptation just for the sake of temptation.

Each one of the temptations addresses an aspect of human nature. It is poignant to note that the first temptation is directed at a physical need. We talked before about how missionaries learned early on that it is difficult to reach a non-Christian with the Word of God if that person is suffering physically. The basic needs of the human condition need to be met so that a person can focus on the message being presented.

When Jesus is talking about the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:34-36 he talks about addressing the physical needs of the people around us:

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”

His position is that we need to meet the physical condition of the people first. It is difficult to minister to the souls of people who are already struggling with why

God would allow them to suffer physically in the first place. If a person is starving, telling them that God loves them doesn't mean just a whole lot. If we feed them and let them know that God is using us to reach them, we will be meeting their physical needs and that, in turn, opens them up to a dialogue that will allow us their spiritual needs. At the very least we will still have met the mandate that Christ set before us of feeding the hungry, quenching the thirst of the thirsty, providing shelter to strangers, clothing the naked, and visiting those in need of compassion and mercy.

At the same time, when we do those things without revealing that God is the source of those gifts, we are also missing the mark. Jesus answers the temptation of meeting His physical needs by quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3 **“He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors 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.”**

Why does Jesus quote scripture here? Isn't his authority enough. After all, He is the son of God. But remember, Satan is not appealing to the Son of God here. He is addressing the human side of Jesus. And while Jesus' authority is certainly enough, He chooses to defer to scripture to validate His response showing that He is very much grounded in the old covenant. Remember, the new covenant has not arrived and will not arrive until the Son of God is sacrificed for the sins of all

mankind. Responding with scripture is not only relevant to the situation but is also relevant with regards to acknowledging the law and the covenant.

But where is the Joy in hunger? Hunger, no matter its nature, is always seeking satisfaction. The Joy in hunger comes from the drive to get that satisfaction. In truth, hunger can only be abated. It is temporary by its very nature. We know that if we feed our bodies today, tomorrow we will be hungry again. Because food is fuel for our bodies, that fuel gets used up as we actively engage in the world around us. As we use that fuel, we need to refill our tanks. The same is true with Gods Word and God's presence.

We've talked about how God wants to fill us to overflowing so that we can reach others, and we have also talked about how if we don't allow God to refuel us, we will not have the resources to meet the needs of the people we encounter. So when Jesus quotes Deuteronomy by saying **"man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord,"** He is telling us that there is so much more to life than just refueling our bodies; that the word of God, as it speaks into our lives, is fuel for our souls. We have a need to feed our souls. As we use the resources that God provides to us through His word, we need to replenish that fuel. That hunger and thirst for the Word of God will never be satisfied. The more we take in, the more we have available for others.

There is a unique parallel with our own bodies and regards to this. The more we are we allow God to speak into us and fill us, the greater our capacity to take in even more. And there is joy in that. There is joy in feasting on the word. There is joy in sharing the word. There is joy in hunger for the word.

My challenge for you this week is for you to spend more time in the Word of God. If you are not used to spending time in God's word every day, I suggest that start by possibly reading a Psalm a day. If you do not own a Bible, please let me know I will make sure that you have one of your own. There are several Bible apps that you can put on your phone. YouVersion is free and can be downloaded from Bible.com or in the app store. It not only has multiple translations but a constantly growing library of Bible Studies that allow you to seek topics that you want to know more about, providing you with educated insight while allowing you to feast on God's word in bite size morsels. The Blue Letter Bible is also available for you phone though Google Play or The App Store.

If you do put the Bible on your phone, I challenge you to use it. I know that there is a tendency when we are waiting for services at various places that we whip out our phones and play games to past the time. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that, but why not, every once in a while, also open your Bible app and read a few verses or a short devotional and feed your soul as well.

As a church, we subscribe to the large print edition of “The Secret Place” from Judson Press. It is printed quarterly and has daily devotionals for three months. This is a free resource to you and I highly recommend it. You can also subscribe to the online edition of “Our Daily Bread” which will also allow you to access to daily scripture-based devotionals that will lift you and give you insight.

I highly encourage you to take advantage of these resources as a means to feeding your soul on a daily basis. I am always grateful that you are here on Sunday and it is a joy and blessing to serve you. But we all need more fuel to enable our growth which, in turn, allows us to feed others. As we take in God’s Word, we find ourselves craving more. And as we indulge that craving, we find Joy in the hunger that pushes us to take in the blessing that God’s word has to offer which in turn feeds our souls.

“man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord,”

AMEN

Copyright © 2020 Rev. Walt Wellborn

Scripture references provided under copyright by:

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

