

Session 4: Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

What We Found

The fourth beatitude blesses an appetite: the hunger for righteousness, which in Matthew's Gospel means righteousness that exceeds (5:20), is lived (6:1), and is sought first (6:33). The Old Testament prayed this hunger as thirst (Psalm 42), heard God's invitation to the thirsty (Isaiah 55), and named the deadliest famine: no appetite for God's word at all (Amos 8:11). St. Augustine's restless heart and St. Gregory's paradox (this food enlarges the hunger it satisfies) frame the promise, and the satisfaction has an address: the Bread of Life (John 6:35; CCC 1391). Grace does not merely credit righteousness; it confers it (CCC 2017).

Voices of the Church

ST. AUGUSTINE · CONFESSIONS I.1

"You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." (Wording varies slightly by translation.) The most famous sentence St. Augustine ever wrote is the fourth beatitude in autobiographical form: he had gorged his appetites for years and remained starving, because the appetite beneath the appetites was for God.

Application (ours, not the saint's): restlessness is data. It is the stomach growling for the one food we have not tried.

ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA · HOMILIES ON THE BEATITUDES

St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches, in substance, a beautiful paradox about this beatitude: with every other food, eating ends the hunger; with righteousness, the taste enlarges the appetite. The soul that partakes of God desires him more, not less, and this ever-expanding desire is not frustration but the very shape of beatitude, since the Good it feeds on is infinite.

Application (ours): step four of the ascent: the emptied, grieving, governed heart now discovers what it was hungry for all along.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS · SUMMA THEOLOGIAE I-II, Q. 2, A. 8

St. Thomas Aquinas argues that no created good can constitute human happiness, teaching in substance that the object of the will is the universal good, as the object of the intellect is universal truth; therefore nothing less than God, the universal good himself, can bring the human will to rest. Every finite good leaves a remainder of desire.

Thomas gives Augustine's cry its architecture: the restlessness is not a design flaw. We are built with a God-sized appetite on purpose.

Live It This Week

- Memorize Matthew 5:6; recite 5:3-6 each morning.
- Fast from one meal or one comfort this week, and when the hunger speaks, answer it out loud with Psalm 42:2.
- Receive Holy Communion this Sunday with the fourth beatitude on your lips as you walk up: "they shall be satisfied." If you have been away from the sacrament, let this be the week you talk to a priest.

· Read Matthew 5:7 before Session 5. The sealed envelopes open next week.

Memory Verse · Matthew 5:6

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Catechism References

CCC 27, 1718, 2017; on the Eucharist as our bread, 1391

Before Next Session

Read Matthew 5:7 before Session 5. The sealed envelopes from Session 1 open next week.