

HOMILY AT ST. MATTHEW ORTHODOX CHURCH

JULY 24, 2022

“THE BEATITUDES, PART 4: BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS---MATTHEW 5:6”

For a while back in 1969, Neil Armstrong was the most famous man in the world because he was the first man to walk on the moon. He was a rather private person and soon came to hate all the publicity and attention. After some time he, an Ohio native, moved to a small Ohio town called Indian Hills to get away from the press, curiosity seekers, etc. The people of that little town for the most part respected his privacy and it was going pretty well.

He went to the same barber every month. They visited during the haircuts and came to be good friends. But something was going on that Armstrong didn't know about. Each time, when Armstrong left the barber shop, the barber would sweep up from the floor the hair that had been cut. Normal thing. But the barber then always put Armstrong's hair in a special bag.....and when the bag was full, he sold it for \$3,000. Armstrong found out and that was the end of that friendship! (“Cleveland Plain Dealer”, 7/11/11)

That barber was very hungry for money! Hungry enough to betray a friend for \$3000. And I'm sure the barber's hunger for money wasn't satisfied.

There was another Ohioan, a Cleveland native, who had a similar craving for money---John D. Rockefeller. He became in the late 1800's perhaps the richest man in the world. Towards the end of his life, someone said to him, “You have untold millions of dollars! I guess you must now be satisfied.” Rockefeller replied, “No, I'm not satisfied. I really want to get one more dollar!” (*The Parables*, Gary Inrig, Discovery House, 1991, p. 98)

Many people seek satisfaction in money or success or popularity. But ultimately, as with John Rockefeller, those things will not bring satisfaction. What will bring satisfaction? Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us in one of the Beatitudes, in Matthew 5:6-----“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

This summer, for several weeks I am not preaching, like usual, on the assigned scripture lessons, but instead am doing a series of sermons on the Beatitudes taught by Jesus Christ, as recorded in the gospel of St. Matthew. In the Beatitudes, the Lord taught us how to be blessed. And how to live in

the Kingdom of Heaven even while still in this world. Today we are up to #4 of the Beatitudes. Hear it again from Matthew 5:6---“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

We will never be truly satisfied by success, popularity, or wealth. Only by hungering and thirsting for righteousness-----for being holy, for drawing closer to God. We already saw that wealth does not satisfy. Neither does success.

About 40 years ago, Jack Higgins was a popular writer who turned out several best-selling novels. But he really wanted to achieve having the number one best-selling book. So he tried harder and harder with every novel. And finally he achieved top ranking with his book, “The Eagle Has Landed”. He was interviewed by a magazine writer about his successful accomplishment. The interviewer asked Higgins----“You made it! Number one, on the top! Can you tell me anything you have learned from finally reaching the top?” “Sure can”, said Higgins; “what I have learned from getting to the top is this--when you get to the top, there is nothing there.” (“Our Daily Bread”, 7/9/94)

So does anyone achieve real satisfaction? John Rockefeller didn't. Jack Higgins didn't. Who does? Jesus tells us in this 4th Beatitude----“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

What did the Lord mean by that phrase about hungering and thirsting for righteousness? Craving God. Craving the things of God. Craving coming to know Jesus Christ better. Craving becoming righteous. The Lord says that if you truly crave God, you will be satisfied----partly in this life, and fully in the life to come.

But if success, popularity, and wealth are what you really crave? Oh, you may very well get them! But they won't satisfy you! And they are so temporary. You know the old saying---“You can't take it with you.”

Thinking about this 4th Beatitude is a good opportunity for each of us to examine ourselves. What is it that I am hungry and thirsty for? What do I crave in life? Only God and the things of God will truly satisfy. And only God and the things of God will not be temporary.

So, instead of wealth, popularity, and success, hunger and thirst for God, for God's kingdom, for becoming truly righteous. And then you will be satisfied.

The Church Father St. Isaac of Syria wrote the following words about 1500 years ago---“Thirst after Jesus and He will satisfy you with His love.” Those words are a good motto for us to live by, good words to remember when we find ourselves hungry and thirsty for pleasure, success, money.....

Hear St. Isaac one more time---“*Thirst after Jesus and He will satisfy you with His love.*” May God help us to want only Him!