



## Fasting: Declaring our Hunger for God

Sunday, February 5/23 --- Matthew 9:14 – 17

*Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.' - Matthew 9:14 – 15*

*Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. - Psalm 73:25 – 26*

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*The birthplace for Christian fasting is homesickness for God... we will do anything and go without anything if, by any means, we might protect ourselves from the deadening effects of innocent delights and preserve the sweet longings of our homesickness for God... In this age there is an ache inside every Christian that Jesus is not here as fully and intimately, as powerfully and as gloriously as we want Him to be. We hunger for so much more. That is why we fast.*

- John Piper, *A Hunger for God*

*More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside of us with food and other things.*

- Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

### Sermon Outline:

- I. Introduction: The Fasting Frenzy
- II. Fasting like a Pharisee: What Christian Fasting **IS NOT** (Mt. 9:14; cf. 6:16 – 18)
- III. Fasting in Christ's Freedom: What Christian Fasting **IS** (Mt. 9:15 – 17)
  - a. Fasting from Fulness: Feasting on the Finished Work of Christ (Already)
  - b. Fasting from Emptiness: Homesickness for Christ the Bridegroom (Not Yet)
- IV. Conclusion: When Should you Fast? (Heart check not a Gut check)



## Discussion Questions:

The early desert fathers believed that a person's appetites are linked. So, self-indulgence can spoil our appetite for God. No wonder gluttony is listed among the seven deadly sins.

- *Do you see the link between some of your lesser appetites / desires, and your hungering and thirsting after God? What are some things in your life that might distract you and replace hungering after God?*

Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, *Fasting must not be confined to the question of food and drink; fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose.*

- *What things might you fast besides food? Have you practiced fasting in the past? How might you want to change your habit of it in the future?*
- *What distinctive quality sets Christian fasting apart from other forms of fasting?*

## Application:

*Decide how you would like to fast in the coming week to increase your hunger for God.*

*Then, do it in the freedom and grace that Christ gives you.*