

THE PENTECOST

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Welcome again, to another issue of The Pentecost! This month we are focusing on the topic of spiritual hunger. We will also visit China to hear of God's great moving in the twentieth century through the life of John Sung. Also, David van Rietschoten will share his heart and experience of following Jesus. God bless you.

Shawn Stevens



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HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS - PART ONE

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled. Matthew 5:6

Jesus spoke these words from the top of a mountain in His famous Sermon On The Mount. Why was He on top of a mountain? It was because this was the perfect venue to accommodate the large crowd which had gathered to hear Him. Jesus had been healing the sick and teaching throughout Galilee. Matthew's Gospel records that, "Then His fame went throughout all Syria ..." (Matthew 4:24) and that "Great multitudes followed Him..." (vs. 25).

Why were they following? No doubt, some were there because they wanted to be healed. Others were there out of curiosity. However, I like to think that some were there for more than that, and that "curiosity" was not a strong enough word to describe their motive for coming. "Curiosity" doesn't capture their appetite for Jesus' teaching. They were looking for answers. For the first time in their lives, they had found someone who had those answers. They were hungry. As they stood there, famished for the spiritual food of truth, they heard Him say, "Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled."

What is it to hunger and thirst for righteousness? "Righteousness" here could be understood in two ways. Firstly, it can be hungering and thirsting for salvation. Reader, perhaps you are hungering and thirsting for this. You feel like an empty husk. You may, or may not, know much about the Bible, but you know that life is not supposed to be as empty as you find it. You may have heard the testimonies of others who have found Christ and claim to have joy and peace. They claim not just peace with themselves, but also peace with God. You feel like you are on the outside looking in. There is a desire in you to have spiritual security and purpose. Friend, this is the beginning of spiritual hunger. It is a blessed thing to be hungry. Let these feelings grow in you and let them draw you to Jesus Christ Himself, Who is the only answer to your need. Let Jesus' words in Matthew, Chapter 5, fill your heart with faith.

Those who hunger for righteousness shall be filled. Those who thirst for righteousness shall be filled. The prodigal son, from Jesus' classic parable, found himself working for a man who owned pigs. Jesus said that the prodigal would have liked to have had even the food that the pigs were eating, but it was denied him. He then decided, "I will arise and go to my father..." (Luke 15:18). Spiritual hunger is like that too. We feel the pangs of it and then decide to go to God with it. Come to the Lord in repentance and faith. Turn your life completely over to Him. Pray for His forgiveness for your sins. Put all of your trust in Jesus' sacrificial death, acknowledging that it was on your behalf. Cry out to God that you want the victory of Christ's death and resurrection to be brought to your soul, as you now believe in its power. Approach God in prayer. Make a full surrender and the hunger for your salvation shall be filled.

While hungering and thirsting for righteousness can be applied to hungering and thirsting for salvation, this is not the only application which can be made from this scripture. There is a hungering that the saved person feels as we hunger for more of God, and for more of His ways lived out in our lives.^{1a} It is the Christian who values righteousness most highly and sees it not as an added supplement to their life but, rather, as an essential.^{1b} John MacArthur has said, "Children of the Kingdom never stop needing or hungering for more of God's righteousness and holiness to be manifest in them through their obedience."² It is this quality of spiritual hungering for righteousness that has characterized so many of our faith's most devoted followers. A.W Tozer once wrote:

Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heart of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him, day and night, in season and out, and when they found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking...there are some I rejoice...,who,...turn

^{1a} In Greek, hunger and thirst usually have objects in the partitive genitive case. This would indicate incompleteness such as hungering for some food or water. In this verse, however, the accusative tense is used, indicating that the righteousness is an unqualified or unlimited object of hunger. This seems to indicate that Jesus is talking about hungering for all the righteousness that there is. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Mathew 1-7* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1985),178.

^{1b} John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Mathew 1-7* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1985),178.

² Ibid., 183.

*away with tears to hunt some lonely place and pray, 'O God show me Thy glory.' They want to taste, to touch with their hearts, to see with their inner eyes the wonder that is God.*³

There is a gnawing hunger which goes with the territory of walking in the Spirit. The Christian has tasted the life of Christ and cannot soon forget it. He or she has a desire to delight themselves in God and to know God better.

Michael Brown once said, "God desires nothing less than all of us, and when we are revived, we desire nothing less than all of Him."⁴

David Brainerd was a young missionary, born in 1718. Departing from New Jersey, he went out into the woodland regions of America to witness to native American Indians. He kept a journal of his experiences as he traveled, many times solo, through this great frontier. His journal is filled with his meditations on God and they tell of his deep spiritual hunger and communion with God. In one entry he says:

*At night I was exceedingly melted with divine love and had some feeling sense of the blessedness of the upper world. Those words hung upon me with much divine sweetness, Psalm 84:7. 'They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.' Oh, the near access that God sometimes gives us in our addresses to Him! This may well be termed appearing before God: it is so indeed, in the true spiritual sense, and in the sweetest sense. I think I have not had such power of intercession these many months, both for God's children and for dead sinners as I have had this evening. I wished and longed for the coming of my dear Lord: I longed to join the angelic host in praises, wholly free from imperfection. Oh, the blessed moment hastens! All I want is to be more holy, more like my dear Lord. Oh, for sanctification! My very soul pants for the complete restoration of the blessed image of my Savior, that I may be fit for the blessed enjoyments and employments of the heavenly world.*⁵

Friend, pray with me,

"Lord Jesus, what we know of Your righteousness has made us hungry and thirsty for more of You. You have drawn us to this place of hungering for You. We would stand before You now and then fall prostrate and have You change us forever. Forgive our sins.

Remove every blockage. Give us great access to Your presence for "... In Your presence is fullness of joy..." (Ps. 16:11). It is this holy joy that we desire. Lord, what we want is You. Lord, You said that You "...will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts." (Rev. 21:6). You are an ever flowing fountain of holiness, goodness, grace, mercy and salvation. We must drink. Be our portion forever. This is stronger than curiosity. Lord, we want to know You. We want to draw near to You by the new and living way. Only this will satisfy us. You are Immanuel, God with us. We accept it by faith, but give us a greater realization of this. We want our lives to be seated together with You in the heavenly places. Lord, we don't want to treat Your righteousness like a supplement. You are the All Nourishing One we want to taste, to touch with our hearts, and to see with our eyes the wonder which is You. Amen.

SHAWN STEVENS

³ A.W. Tozer, "Following Hard After God" *The Best of Tozer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978),16-17

⁴ Dr. Michael Brown, *From Holy Laughter to Holy Fire: America on the Edge of Revival* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 1997), 83.

⁵ David Brainerd, *The Life And Diary Of David Brainerd* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996),82.

The Life and Ministry of John Sung

Souls were crying out tearful confessions. Others were making restitution. Others were going to friends and family to ask for forgiveness. Visitors were hearing the reports and streaming into the church. Lost souls were finding Christ and churches began springing up. Revival had come. The year was 1909, and the place was Hinghwa, Fukien Province, China.

The revival became known as the **Hinghwa Pentecost of 1909**. One man who was deeply touched during the revival was a Methodist minister. It became his practice to go up on a hill every morning and pray for his family. He would take his six-year-old son with him, and prayed that God would use his son to bring revival to China. That son was John Sung and he would go on to be a great revivalist in China.

When John Sung had finished his high-schooling, he prayed that he might go to the United States for further education. His father was not a wealthy man, however, around that time someone who owed his father some money paid off the debt. The amount was enough to pay for John Sung's boat fare to the U. S. Sung soon found himself in Ohio, without any money. Someone noticed the troubled Sung and graciously helped him find two jobs, one which would pay for his room and board and the other, which would pay for his school tuition.

Sung continued with his education and went on to complete a doctorate in chemistry. Upon graduation, he was offered the opportunities of becoming an instructor at the Ohio State University, of going to Germany for further studies, or of teaching Science at a university in Peking. As he was considering his options, he sensed that the Lord was reminding him that he had been dedicated to the work of the ministry. God was again calling him to preach. He decided to walk away from the three offers just mentioned and, instead, went to a theological seminary in New York.

Instead of seminary being a spiritual chapter in his life, it became the exact opposite. After a semester, he felt as if he had lost his faith. Sung sank into a deep depression. Between semesters, Sung had quality time in which he began studying the Bible on his own. As he did, he seemed to come back alive spiritually. He began having remarkable

spiritual experiences which included being filled with the Holy Spirit and having a vision of Jesus Christ, Who spoke to him about his future ministry. Overjoyed, he ran into the hall, shouting, "I found God, and Jesus has spoken to me." Next, he approached his professor, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, and rebuked him for previously causing him to leave his faith. Fosdick calmly told Sung that Sung needed to rest for a while in a particular place that Fosdick would find for him. Before Sung realized what was happening, he had been committed to a mental hospital.

Sung would remain here for 193 days. He was considered by some to be insane, but only because he was so spiritually-minded all of the time. Sung would read his Bible day and night and when doctors would come to examine him, Sung would instead be questioning them. He would ask them if they were born again, if they knew God, if God had forgiven their sins and what were they living for, themselves, others, or God. Word was sent back to China that Sung had gone insane on religion. The Chinese Consul made arrangements for his release and he returned to China in 1927.

As Sung was journeying to China, he shockingly threw his diplomas out of a porthole on the ship. He felt that he would not need to lean on them for the ministry that God was calling him to. Sung began teaching Science in a Mission school. He also spoke at district conferences and articles were written about him in a Methodist periodical.

In 1930, he came to a religious education conference near Shanghai as a delegate, not as a speaker. However, he brought with him a suitcase full of literature and one missionary asked him to take her place as a speaker. After hearing him, other speakers did the same thing and Sung became the main speaker at the conference.

Other ministry doors began to open for Sung. He was invited to preach in schools and even in a hospital. Many students came to Christ in the school meetings. Sung rebuked school teachers who taught academic disciplines but did not include spiritual instruction. Some were greatly offended by his rebuke and others came under deep conviction.

More doors of ministry opened for Sung. Sometimes he would preach three times a day and with great intensity. More students were gripped with conviction and some took idols from their homes and disposed of them in a river. In one meeting, the Holy Spirit suddenly fell

on the 250 to 300 in attendance. The group began praying incessantly, as God was moving among them in unusual ways. At one point, Sung tried to close the meeting but the Holy Spirit fell on the congregation again and a chorus of prayer erupted. This happened a third time and spontaneous prayer resounded for approximately forty-five minutes. Many attendees began confessing sins, including some Communist agitators who were subsequently converted.

Doors continued to open for Sung and, before long, he had a China-wide ministry. It has been estimated that between 1933 and 1936, Sung had 100,000 converts. Between 1939 and 1942, Sung was very sick and spent much time in hospitals. People came to him and, eventually, he was carried from place to place, still ministering, but from a bed. Sung died on Aug. 18, 1944.

The prayers of an old Methodist minister were answered as God used John Sung to bring revival to China. It was not his luck, skill or education which propelled Sung forward. It was God's invisible hand raising him up, sustaining him and using him to reach out to a nation of needy souls.

SHAWN STEVENS

Reference:

Schubert, William E. **I Remember John Sung**. Elkhart: Strategic Press, n.d.

In the last issue, I introduced you to my friend, David van Rietschoten, who has been serving on the Logos II. He shared the following message while stopped in Trinidad. Now, he shares it with us.

FOLLOWING JESUS

Trinidad will always hold a near and dear place in my heart. It is where I joined the Logos II. Two years ago on Friday I walked out of the plane to your wonderful land. When I joined the ship I never thought that I would be speaking in front of you like this. It is just a testimony of God's working and faithfulness, and I give Him all the praise and glory for the changes that he has done in my life over the past years.

I would like to tell you a short story. You are playing outside, the sun is shining and the world is perfect. You are 5 years old and you have your best friend in the whole world, the one that you do every thing with next to you. You are playing away then something happens and your best friend is taken away from you. Not only is your best friend taken away from you; she dies. What is worse than she dies is that you see it happen. No longer is your world perfect, it has come crashing down around you. You are no longer happy, no longer a joyful little kid anymore, you are crushed and start to withdrawal into yourself.

Now imagine that you are in school and you have one friend. You are picked on, bugged because you are a bit heavier than most, and because you don't look or act cool. Imagine what that does to your insides imagine how you feel.

I don't know if I hit a nerve in some of you. Maybe that is your story. You were picked on in school, or you had something very tragic happen to you when you were younger or both. That is my story. By the time that I was 13 I was not wanting to be around people and had no self-confidence at all. I could do things well and people would tell me that, but

in the end I was like “ya right! You are just saying that!” I was a messed up kid and was thinking that I didn't really have any hope of getting better.

I will get back to my story a bit later...right now I would like you to turn to Matt 4:18-22. (read it) Here you have a picture. You have Jesus walking down the beach of the Sea of Galilee and he sees Simon or Peter and Andrew fishing off the shore. I am sure that he smiled as he looked at them casting the nets into the water and then I am sure that he showed a greeting first. They would have replied. “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!” He said. I wonder if they stopped and asked him to say it again... “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!” I am sure that they stopped and talked to each other to wonder what his man on the shore was about. Then they decided to pull in their nets and follow Him. A little while down the shore line the same thing happens. “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!” He said again. This time James and John dropped the nets that they were working on and started to follow Him, leaving their father behind wondering “What in the world has gotten in to my boys!”

Jesus didn't call them out to do big things for him to start with. He didn't say “Peter, you will be the one that I build my church on” Or “John, you will be exiled to an island for the rest of your life and you will see things that you never could dream. "No he didn't tell them that. He just asked them to follow him. To learn from Him and to follow him. To take that first step in faith.

That is were my story continues. I didn't know it at the time but that is what God did to me when I was 16, He asked me to step out and follow him. By that time I was really withdrawn but getting tired of it. Then that call came... “Hey David, we are having a youth group meeting over at my house, would you like to come?” A youth leader asked me at the new church that we were attending. “Ummm....maybe” I

mumbled back. He gave me his address and that was that. Friday came around and my mom and I got into the van to drive down to the house. We arrived and there we sat, across the street. My mom wouldn't tell me what to do and that drove me nuts! I needed to make the step out. It was a just a small one, the step. I did, in the end, step out of the van and into the house. _Ummm....maybe” I mumbled back. He gave me his address and that was that. Friday came around and my mom and I got into the van to drive down to the house. We arrived and there we sat, across the street. My mom wouldn't tell me what to do and that drove me nuts! I needed to make the step out. It was a just a small one, the step. I did, in the end, step out of the van and into the house.

In Matthew 10:5 we read that Jesus set out the twelve into the surrounding areas. He asked them to step out more, to take another step for them. I can almost imagine being there... I can see them all milling around Jesus as he is telling them what to do. I am sure that some of them are worried, some are ready for what ever may happen, and some are just excited to be following what the Master is calling them to do. It was another small step for them. They have been walking with Jesus for a while now and I am sure that they were feeling comfortable in their life, but that isn't where they needed to be. Jesus was asking them to step out again...to take a bigger step of faith. And they did so with amazing results.

I look back over my life, during this time, before I joined the ship and I see God calling me many different times and in many different ways. Either going for a week of evangelism training and then going out to talk to people on the street. Or getting into a group that went to downtown Vancouver to feed the homeless that live down there. Or starting to go to the local food bank (a place were people can get food). Or going to Turkey for a month on a missions trip. He just asked me to follow one step at a time. It has not all



been external either. It may have been to spend more time with Him, to start to read the bible more, to start to go down on my knees and pray more. Different things like that are all following in the Masters footsteps

The last verse that I want to touch on is a very well known verse for missions for spreading the Gospel, the great commission. Matt 28:18-20 (read) Think about it. These people have been called by Jesus three or so years ago to follow him. At that time of their calling, all that Jesus asked them to do was to follow him, to learn from him. That was all. Then He asked them to tell about Him in different areas around the area that he was ministering in. After that, he asked them to step out again and to go in to the whole world, to take the plunge and follow him world wide.

That happened to me in December 2003, I was asked to join the Logos II as the baker and, after prayer and thought, I said yes. And you know what? The steps are not over yet. Even now I feel that I am still back with the fishermen that Jesus called "Follow me, and I will make you fisher of men!" I am just following the Master to where He goes. Right now I

am just learning more about him and learning what it means to follow him. It is a challenge but...but...it is more that worth it.

What about you? Are you following the Master? What is He asking you to do today? Right now? Is there something burning on your heart that you need to do but you have been putting it off? I encourage you, no I challenge you, to step out Today! Maybe it is just opening up the Bible more than once on a Sunday, or maybe it is talking to your neighbour, the one that makes too much noise and keeps you up half the night. I don't know what it is but just follow. Or maybe it is to start to pray for the nation, for your nation, for other nations? Or maybe, just maybe, it is to leave your home, your job, your family and follow the Master overseas. Don't stop following. Go for it and take that next step.