



Title: A Hunger for God (stand alone message: not part of a series)

Text: Matthew 3:13-4:4

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Intro: Culture draws us out to sea like a riptide, seeking to make us dependent on everything and anything but God. At the start of this very important year for our church, we take time to prepare for our Daniel fast. For us, this fast will be a way in which we stick our heads above the haze, row against the current of self-absorbed culture, and seek more of God's wisdom for us.

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I. A FEW OBSERVATIONS ON THIS TEXT

1. The humility of Jesus.

Jesus comes to be baptized by John, not because he needed to repent, but because he is beginning his ministry as an example and that he has come to identify with us in incredible humility. Contrast this with the presumption, pride, arrogance and self-righteousness of religion, and our culture. God the Son condescends in unspeakable humility.

2. Temptation and suffering of Jesus.

Jesus begins his ministry by being driven intentionally by the Spirit to be tempted by the Devil. Contrast this with the prevailing thought that avoidance of trial and struggle is an indicator of blessing. Of course, not all struggle means that God is leading you. 1 Peter 4:12-16 tells us clearly that we should not be surprised at the fiery trial that has come upon us to test us, but we need to make sure that we are not suffering because of our own sin. And, when we do suffer for Jesus, we should not be ashamed but should glorify God.

3. Fasting was an essential part of Jesus' preparation for ministry.

Jesus prepares for His temptation and the launching of his public ministry with fasting. This is incredibly important. Jesus is infinitely stronger than us. Jesus used fasting as a weapon against the enemy. How much more should we?

What is fasting? A period of time in which we go without food or drink (or some comfort or convenience) so that we might set our hearts, minds, souls, bodies and life more fully on God.

II. WHY WE ARE FASTING AS A CHURCH?

1. To reveal our hearts.

A). Questions to ask ourselves:

- What are we controlled by?
- What are we slaves to?
- What are we hungrier for—meats and sweets? Or God?
- Will we murmur like Israel did?

B). What we see will not all be good.

- Don't be condemned by this.

C). We need to let this lead us to confession and repentance.

- This is good for us. It brings us closer to God.

2. To help us pray more effectively for God's purpose and wisdom.

A). The early church at Antioch in Acts 13:1-3.

B). Fasting is not a way to manipulate God. It is a way to manipulate our hearts to see God!

- We cannot put God into our debt (Romans 11:35)

C). The wind of the Spirit of God is *always* blowing. Fasting and prayer raises our sails.

3. For more of God, not His miracle bread.

- **Psalm 73:25**—“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.”

III. HOW ARE WE FASTING AS A CHURCH?

1. Daniel 1—Meats and Sweets

→ Other things you may want to consider fasting from:

- TV
- Internet
- Facebook
- Texting
- Recreation
- Caffeine (Cigarettes & Tobacco, Alcohol)
- Non-essential purchases & shopping
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→ Be careful to avoid legalism. We will fail. That should just remind us how much we need Jesus' perfect obedience as a substitute for our frail efforts.

2. For 10 days (January 11-20)

- Or until the end of the month, January 31st

3. Combining it with prayer

- Prayer gatherings (Sunday night 1/10, Wed 1/13, Sun 1/17, Wed 1/20)
- Daily prayer guide to help focus us

4. Reading through John together

- John 6:60-71

Quotes:

“Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has Heaven’s gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central Glory.”

-Charles Spurgeon

“The weakness of hunger which leads to death brings forth the goodness and power of God who wills life. Here there is no extortion, no magic attempt to force God’s will. We merely look with confidence upon our heavenly Father and through our fasting say gently in our hearts: “Father, without you I will die; come to my assistance, make haste to help me.”

-Joseph Wimmer (Fasting in the New Testament).