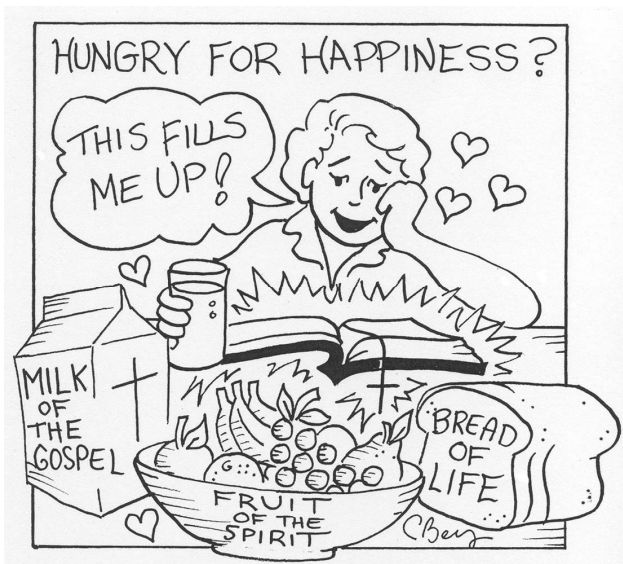

How can I be happy when I'm hungry all the time?

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."
Matthew 5:6*



First of all, righteousness is being declared not guilty by God. It's an acquittal. Righteousness means that God the Judge looks at you and declares you not guilty of all your sins because Jesus covers you in his holiness. Jesus' holiness becomes your holiness in God's sight. That's righteousness and it's a gift that is received by those who put their trust in Jesus as their Savior. Flowing from this gift is another one. When you know God has forgiven your sins, you want to do things God's way. This, too, is righteousness. Jesus says when you long for God's not guilty verdict, you will also long for ways to say "thank you" with your life. You will hunger for righteousness.

I have never really been hungry. Have you? What I mean is I can't remember a time when I had gone days without eating and didn't know when I would eat again. What a terrible, desperate feeling that must be. People who go on diets can't say they know that kind of hunger, but they speak of feeling hungry all the same. And it's not a pleasant feeling.

Jesus once said that actually it's great to be hungry all the time. In fact, it makes you happy. But listen to the "hunger" he's talking about: *"Blessed (happy) are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled"* (Matthew 5:6). The only hunger that makes someone happy is the hunger for righteousness.

Jesus used the word "righteousness" to talk about two related blessings for his followers.

There's lots of spiritual junk food out there, and it may seem like your soul's hunger will be satisfied by it. What about the idea that if you're pretty good or just try a little harder or are better than the next guy, then God will have to accept you? That's not real righteousness. It's self-righteousness, and it's a spiritual Twinkie that can never truly satisfy your spiritual needs.

Instead be hungry for Jesus' righteousness. Yearn for the forgiveness only he can supply and receive it by trusting in him. And then stay hungry. Stay hungry for making the words and deeds of your life a big "thank you" to God who sent his Son Jesus for you. To be hungry for righteousness is to be happy ... and satisfied.