



## Knox Presbyterian Church

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## STEPHEN MINISTRY



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*"Christ caring for People  
through People"*

August 1, 2010

*<sup>1</sup>Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup>and he began to teach them saying:*

*<sup>3</sup>"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*<sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

*<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

**<sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**

*<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

*<sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

*<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

*<sup>10</sup>Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5 (NIV)*

To be in a right relationship with God; this is the summary of the first four beatitudes. To be poor in spirit; i.e. to humbly recognize our total neediness before God; to mourn, i.e. to be at the end of our rope and confess this neediness; to be meek, i.e. to accept our real situation and be thus blessed in it; all of these are summed up in 'hungering and thirsting for God.' As expressed in The Message, ***'You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.'***

We need to think carefully about one aspect of this. It's not ***our*** craving or appetite that brings the blessing. As much as we need to express our desire to know God better that's not what makes it happen. We can't 'work up a good appetite' as a means of earning our blessing. The initiative always rests with God. Ours is to open the door, He is the one who enters. And even before we open the door, remember Jesus words, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." In other words, 'we love because He first loved us'. All credit belongs to God. We are the recipients, He is the giver. Even our faithfulness is first a gift from God says Paul. He made us, we belong to him, and He sustains our very existence. As theologian Paul Tillich expressed it, "We must accept the fact that he has accepted us, even though we are unacceptable." We are valuable, but only because He values us.

But there is still a part for us in the whole story. It is to respond, and give thanks.

In the Old Testament we find this craving variously expressed: (The Message)  
***Isaiah 1:3 "Listen to me, all you who are serious about right living and committed to seeking God.***

***Genesis 17:24 "Be generous with me and I'll live a full life; not for a minute will I take my eyes off your road. I'm a stranger in these parts; give me clear directions. My soul is starved and hungry, insatiable for your nourishing commands. I'm absorbed in pondering your wise counsel."***

May you and I be thus 'filled' with the presence and love of God.

Amen.

(Rev.) John McGurrin