

Blessed are the Thirsty

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

Matthew 5:6

One element of the Sermon on the Mount that strikes with great force is our Lord's focus on the internal work of God in our lives. We discuss, measure, and assess our "spiritual condition" on the outward and visible aspects of the Christian life. Christ zeros in on the internal.

- In giving financially, we focus on how much we give; Jesus focused on what is left (Mark 12:42-44). This emphasizes our heart's focus on the heavenly rather than the earthly (Matt 7:19-21)
- Our "affection (or) mind" (time, attention, thought) tends to focus on earthly things. Christ directs us to heavenly things (do we even know what those are?) (Colossians 3:2)
- Our prayer life can lean toward repetitions and empty phrases (Matthew 6:7). Paul says flatly, "We do not know what to pray for in our weakness." Again, it is a focus on our hearts. (Romans 8:26)
- In matters of disobedience and sin, we examine actions; our Lord examines our heart, mind, and affection (Matthew 5:22, 27-30).

Jesus, throughout His sermon, will describe the pathway to happiness. Not an earthly, sensual, temporary happiness, but a deep, abiding, blessedness that transcends all circumstances in this world. He offers satisfaction to the human condition and an unobtainable fortune that cannot be found anywhere other than Himself.

So far, we have seen:

- **Spiritual poverty** (Matthew 5:3) – regardless of your family's economic class, ethnicity, country of origin, or accumulation of material goods, until we see ourselves spiritually bankrupt without recourse, we will never see the Kingdom.
- **Spiritual mourning** (Matthew 5:4) – until a person is broken over their moral condition before God and His holiness, they will always seek "comfort" from the things of this world.
- **Spiritual humility** (meekness) (Matthew 5:5) – The worldly philosophy summed up in a few words is, "he who has the most toys wins." It emphasizes power, strength, might, and any other power to gain the upper and "win." However, Jesus says the humble shall "inherit the earth."

Today, we examine spiritual hunger and thirst. This beatitude speaks about strong desire, driving passion, consummate ambition, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Jesus is communicating about our deepest needs. It begs the question, "What are we pursuing?"

"Indeed, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus extols such hunger as "blessed." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt 5:6). And Jesus offers himself as the only satisfaction of such hunger: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35). If the heart is like a stomach . . . we could render Augustine's prayer in line with the metaphor: "You have made us for yourself, and our gut will rumble until we feed on you."¹

I. Righteousness as a Gift of Grace

- A. The gospel of Matthew shines a light on "ethical righteousness" (think Pharisees). As a result, when we encounter "righteousness," we tend to focus on righteous behaviors.
- B. However, this creates a false dichotomy, and instead, righteousness is a sign of God's saving activity:
 1. **Psalm 71:2**, *In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me, and save me!*
 2. **Psalm 143:11**, *For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life! In your righteousness, bring my soul out of trouble!*
- C. This blessedness is ascribed to receivers, not achievers. **Consider Romans 4:1-8** (Abraham & David)
 1. **2 Corinthians 5:20**, *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

II. Righteousness as a Sanctifying Force

- A. This soul-renovating righteousness frees us from the power & pollution of sin. It is Matt 6:33 in action, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

¹ James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016), 58.

- B. This inner work is the work of God's Spirit in the Temple of our bodies (1 Cor 6:19,20).
 - 1. **2 Corinthians 5:17**, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come*
 - 2. Leo Tolstoy, "Everybody thinks of changing humanity, and nobody thinks of changing himself."
 - a) **Isaiah 56:1**, *Thus says the Lord: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed.*
 - b) **Proverbs 8:20**, *I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice,*
- C. A negative example
 - 1. Israel's daily provision of manna at the time of Moses (**Exodus 16:19**, *And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning."*)
 - 2. When some failed to listen (**Exodus 16:20**, *But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.*
 - 3. This may be the background for Jesus' comment later in the Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew 6:19–20**, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*
 - 4. Our hunger should refuse to be satisfied with nothing less than God
 - 5. Modern commentators:
 - a) *"Hungering and thirsting for righteousness probably includes yearning for God's justice, for His vindication of the oppressed."*
 - b) Righteousness – "a synonym for the Christian life" as "the ultimate satisfaction of relationship with God unclouded by disobedience." As "a pattern of conformity to God's will"

III. Righteousness as a Glorifying Testimony

- A. Humbleness of Salt and Light (Matthew 5:13-14). Offering enrichment and illumination.
- B. Sincerity in prayer that His will is done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).
- C. When seeking to rectify society or another's ills, they fix their own first (beams and splinters)
- D. Scripture
 - 1. **Amos 5:24**, *But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*
 - 2. **Isaiah 58:7–8**, *[When you] share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.*
 - 3. **Matthew 25:37**, *Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? Matthew 25:40, And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'*

I. Righteousness as the Satisfaction to Hunger and Thirst.

- A. It is desperation! It is the strongest impulses in the natural realm (hunger and thirst)
- B. Moses - **Exodus 33:18**, *Moses said, "Please show me your glory."*
- C. David - **Psalms 63:1–2** *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.*
- D. Paul - **Philippians 3:10**, *That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*
- E. Peter - **2 Peter 3:18**, *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

"The Christian is one who at one and the same time is hungering and thirsting, and yet he is filled. And the more he is filled, the more he hungers and thirsts. This is the blessedness of the Christian life."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones