

Hungering And Thirsting For Righteousness

Text : **Matthew 5: 1-12**

INTRODUCTION :

A. The word “beatitude” is not in the scriptures.

1. It is an obsolete English word which means “The most blessed.”
2. It was an adjective used to describe some people.
3. Thus, it’s an appropriate description of this section of scripture.

B. There is a unity to the beatitudes.

1. Jesus was teaching the kind of character a God-follower must have.
 - a. He is not giving a list of commands.
 - b. He is not telling people how to be saved.
2. **Vs. 1 - When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.**
 - a. The “beatitudes” were given to his disciples (His followers), not to the multitude.
 - b. Jesus was setting down so the group was small.
3. All these beatitudes are part of one character sketch. (cf- **Gal. 5 “fruit of the spirit”**)

C. There is a progression to the beatitudes.

1. **Vs. 3** As one begins to seek God, he realizes he is spiritually bankrupt.
2. **Vs. 4** The realization of his condition will cause him to mourn his lack of righteousness.
3. **Vs. 5** In reaction to his mourning his pride will be removed humbling him before God.
4. **Vs. 6** Being humbled, he will long for ... hunger for ... thirst for righteousness.

D. As one develops this character, he is blessed.

1. The blessing is more than just being happy as is now translated in some versions.
2. “Happiness” connotes achievement or chance. **Blessedness is given by God.**
3. “Blessed” is the name given to the island of Cyprus by the ancient Greeks.
 - a. Rich and fertile, it contained everything one in the ancient world could want.
 - b. It exported many things, but imported none.
4. When one develops the character described by the beatitudes, God bestows blessedness upon him.

One lesson is not sufficient to touch on all aspects of the character described by the beatitudes so this lesson will concentrate on just one : *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

I. This beatitude projects an intensity of desire.**A. Hunger for righteousness ... for rightness with God ... for holiness.**

1. Few Americans have ever experienced real hunger so it is difficult for us to relate.
 - a. Some who lived through the great depression might possibly have experienced it.
 - b. America has never experienced a general famine.
 - c. We have safety nets in place to rescue those who fall on hard times.
2. These people lived on the edge of hunger.
 - a. They lived day to day with no security.
(**“Give us this day our daily bread.” meant exactly that.**)
 - b. The average wage was a denarii which is approximately **17 cents** in our money.
 - c. If they got no work one day, their family did not eat that day. (**always uncertain**)
3. Life depended on **“the early and late rains.”** (cf – **James 5:7**)
 - a. Without the early rains the crops won't sprout.
 - b. Without the later rains the crops won't produce the harvest. (**grain or fruit**)
 - c. Rain has always been undependable in Palestine.

B. Thirst for righteousness.

1. Palestine is a hot dry place. (**America has an abundance of clean water.**)
 - a. In the summer the temperatures get up to a hundred in the day and cool at night.
 - b. When the hot east wind blows off the desert it dries and parches everything.
2. They are familiar with drought. (**Every year is almost like our dust bowl years.**)
 - a. Only 23 inches of rain per year
 - b. 70% falls in 50 days (torrents or drought)
 - c. Cisterns are essential to survival.
3. These people knew what true thirst meant.
 - a. They had no running water or showers in their houses. (**Carried pitcher-by-pitcher**)
 - b. They had experienced their tongue getting thick and their lips cracking.
 - c. They knew what it was to feel you would die if you did not soon get water.

C. This is the attitude Jesus tells His disciples we must have.

1. We must be desperate to get righteousness.
2. Christians must feeling that righteousness is essential to our very survival.

II. Jesus tells us that this hungering and thirsting must consistently be our mindset.

A. There are technical aspects that are lost in the translation.

1. The tense of these verbs is the “durative present”, i.e., *present and continuing action*.
2. The case of the verb is “direct accusative”, i.e., *to desire all of it, not just some*.
(When a Greek verb is followed by the genitive it indicates “some”, not all.)
3. Thus, it is to always be hungering and thirsting to be completely righteous.

B. Most of us have intermittent hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

1. When we’ve done something that particularly offends our conscience we want purity.
2. When we’re caused to contemplate death we want to be righteous when we meet God.
3. When we experience a spiritual high we desire to be better than we are, e.g., workshops.

C. Jesus wants His disciples to consistently long intently for righteousness, for holiness.

III. This hungering and thirsting must become a part of the Christian’s character.

A. It becomes part of the Christian’s nature.

1. He doesn’t have to think about it or make a decision to do it.
* **Not set aside a time each day to desire righteousness.**
2. It is as natural to him as his desire for food and water.

B. When faith initially motivates one to hunger and thirst, he seeks justification.

1. When one becomes a Christian, he is justified. **He is made holy.**
2. This is not to say that he becomes personally good or righteous.
3. In spite of their intense desire not to do so, Christians still sin.

C. When one becomes a Christian, the righteousness of Jesus is imputed to him.

1. He is called “**out of darkness into His marvelous light.**” **I Pet. 2: 9**
2. He is “**clothed**” with the righteousness of Christ. **Gal. 3:27**
3. One comes up out of the water with an indescribable feeling of exaltation.

ill.- **Like a peasant being made a knight of the realm.**
It is a time of great joy, a time for feeling emancipated.

D. However, that righteousness is not the believer’s own, it is imputed.

IV. The hunger for righteousness continues after the initial purification.

A. After the Christian gets rid of the stain of sin, he longs to remain pure.

1. He longs for every thought, every word and every deed to be as pure as those of God.
2. Even so, he falls short of his desire; he sins.

B. Though we hunger and thirst to be free from the power of sin, we are ensnared.

1. Sin still finds its way into each of our lives.
2. There's never been a time during our life on earth when we did not sin. (yr, mo, wk)
3. We hunger and thirst to have that weakness and that vulnerability removed.

C. The blessing comes as a result of the inward hunger, of the craving to be holy.

1. Jesus did not say, "Blessed are they who achieve righteousness."
2. Men judge each other by outward deeds because that's all they can see, but God sees the heart so He judges the motives rather than the results.
 - a. We all stand naked before God. (**No mask, No deceit, Nothing hidden**)
 - b. Men foolishly compare themselves to other men based on what they see. **I Cor. 10:12**
 - c. God looks at your true values, not just your successes or what you project.
3. There will never be a time when we achieve righteousness on our own.
4. No one who loves the Lord will ever achieve what he wants to achieve for the Lord.

D. Remember what God told David when He refuse to let him built the temple.

I Kings 8:18- But the Lord said to my father David, 'Because it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart.

1. The act was forbidden, but he was rewarded for what was in his heart.
2. Many in this audience have desired to use their lives to build a golden temple for God, but were only able to pitch a humble tent for Him. **You are blessed in the eyes of God.**
 - a. Yes, there are some who talk a good fight, but their heart's not in it.
 - b. But, others long for righteousness far above their ability to accomplish it. **Blessed**
 - c. God knows and the blessing is based on the desire of the heart, not the accomplishment.
3. Don't let Satan discourage you because of your lack of success, God know what you want to accomplish for Him and He blesses that desire.
3. If your sincere desire is for your life to be a glorious gift to God, God knows.
 - a. God knows those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.
 - b. You'll be blessed for that strong desire of your heart.

CONCLUSION :

A. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will receive the blessing.

1. The promise **will** be fulfilled.
2. Remember how you felt when you came up out of that watery grave ?!
 - a. The burden of sin had been lifted and you felt totally free, exhilarated beyond words.
 - b. The more one experiences that feeling the more he wants it.
 - c. It becomes a hunger that can't be satisfied.
3. The words of that old song, "Tell Me The Old, Old Story" have a special meaning.
 - a. The gospel story never gets old no matter how many times we hear it.
 - b. The more we hear those O.T. stories of faith the more they give us peace.

B. There will be a time when your hunger will be satisfied.

1. Imagine a time when you could finish the day without knowing you had not fallen short.
2. Imagine not having to apologize to God, "I'm sorry Lord. I let you down again today."
3. **Read ... Rev. 7: 13-17**

Be steadfast in this time of testing.

Do not be discouraged by your failures.

If you truly hunger and thirst for righteousness, your desire WILL be satisfied.

One day we'll see Christ.

We'll be made just like he is ... truly holy.

C. Is this what you want ?

What is the desire of your heart ?

Why not let Him cleanse you right now ?

INVITATION :