

Hungering and Thirsting after Righteousness

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[0 : 00] This is happening. The people which sat in darkness saw great light. And so light is springing up, and something real is happening now.

But it's also unfamiliar to them. You've got to imagine that. You've got to put yourself in their shoes and realize that what this Christ that they're following and this Messiah, this is brand new, and it's never happened before.

Never in their lifetime. Never in their parents' lifetimes. Never in their grandparents' lifetime. So what's happening, what we're reading, though it's very familiar to us, it's not at all familiar to them.

And so he takes them apart, and he teaches them some things that I think some of the words are familiar words and familiar concepts. They're Old Testament truths that they've already heard and know, and we'll see some of that.

But then there's also some things later in chapter 5 that aren't so familiar, and might even come across a bit confusing to them as he teaches them some things that go beyond what they've been taught.

[1 : 10] And that's not somewhere we're going to go this evening. But do understand that, overall, it's a lot to take in for these disciples in the moment. And it starts off very mild in chapter 5, and then it gets, I'd say it probably grows in complexity, some of his teachings.

So, very early in the ministry of Jesus Christ, there's still, I'd say, some uncertainty with these men, and what's about to take place. They haven't been commissioned.

They haven't gone off. They haven't been healing themselves and preaching as much. So, there's a lot to take place, and the ministry is young. I think that's the best way to describe it, Matthew 5.

The ministry of Christ is young, and he calls these men away and sits them down and begins. And I have to imagine that they are all ears at this moment, because this, like, he's going to teach us.

He's going to say some things. What is his angle, and what is he all about? And what are we going to hear from him that we haven't heard from the others? And so, I think they're curious, and I think the men in this moment are expectant as well, because this is a revelation of who this Jesus Christ is and what he's all about.

[2 : 20] So, now let's begin again now in verse 3, and read from Matthew 5, verse 3 to verse 12. And the Lord Jesus Christ says, Now, flip back to Psalm 37, and I'll point out one of these verses and a few of these concepts.

It's nothing new to them, but he's preaching and what he's teaching them. Psalm 37, and look at verses 9 through 11. Look over at verse number 29, and we'll read down to verse 34.

Psalm 37, and verse 4.

Now, in Matthew 6, he says words that really match all of those concepts and those truths, and that's just a glimpse, a drop in the bucket of the prophets and the preaching that is instilled in the hearts of the Jews in this day, and words that they grew up in the Lord.

And now the Lord says some things that are just, they're very much in line. Jesus Christ declaring in Matthew 5, the blessing. Blessed are the poor in spirit, and they that mourn, and the meek, and they which hunger and thirst, and the merciful, and the pure in heart.

[5 : 18] And there's a blessing upon those that are hurting. And he says to them, your day is going to come.

I want to point your attention out to something we read, and I hope you caught it. In verse 4, it says, they shall be comforted. In verse 5, they shall, future, inherit the earth.

It's just like the psalm. It's future. It hasn't taken place yet. It's verse 6, shall be filled. And you can continue through that passage we read with this future promise.

And so what I want you to understand as we read Matthew 5, and I know a lot of teaching and preaching is misinterpreted out of here. What we're reading is that Jesus Christ is reassuring them of the future blessing and of the future day that's been promised to Israel of their kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, as he calls it in verse 3, and he calls it in verse 10.

He's reassuring them of what these prophets have promised them, of what God has said, and that everything one day is going to be made right, and God is going to come and judge, God is going to come and rule, and he's going to bring in, as Daniel says, everlasting righteousness in that day.

[6 : 39] So his message at the beginning of Matthew 5 is affirming the word of the Old Testament prophets, of Israel's deliverance, and of their kingdom.

That it's going to come. And that they want to be on the right side of this kingdom. They want to be seeking God. They want to be pure in heart. They want to be peacemakers and living merciful and meek.

They want to be on the right side when God returns. They want to be patiently waiting for his return, as we read back in Psalm 37. So now that we've kind of discussed the context, look at verse number 6 again.

I just want to kind of key in a little bit here on this one in particular. Verse 6 says, Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be future, they shall be filled.

The statement is to those faithful Hebrews that are living in a longing for the right to prevail.

[7 : 47] They desire to experience righteousness ruling in their land. And to see God and God's people obeying the word of God.

And to live in a society that bears the marks of holiness. And bears the effects of the truth of God put into practice.

And there's a blessing promised, a future blessing. And it's God's pledge that the realization of this righteousness that they hope for, that they long for, that they hunger and thirst after, that it'll come to pass.

And that's what Jesus is promising in that verse. That this is the hope that he's affirming to these disciples, that the day will come. He doesn't promise, oh, it's coming today.

He doesn't do that. He doesn't say that it'll happen in your lifetime. It's possible that it could have. But it will come. And God has declared it.

[8 : 51] And God said in Isaiah, I will work and who shall let it? No one's going to stop the Lord God from fulfilling his word. Now in verse 6, I'll read it again.

And blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. I don't think there's ever been a time that I have not read and loved that verse and loved that concept.

I don't know if I've ever read it and just went on past it without pausing and just considering what that is like and what that promise is going to look like. Because I think inside of me and I trust and hope inside of you and your new man for sure is a longing and a desire to live in a land of righteousness.

And to live where you're surrounded by holiness and purity and where right and truth is exalted instead of cast down as truth is cast down in the streets.

I've read that and I've sat and paused and I've longed to have that desire fulfilled where hungering and thirsting after righteousness, where I know the experience of resting in that atmosphere, of being at peace in a culture and in a world where righteousness dominates, where God reigns over man.

[10 : 15] God reigns over man. Not man reigning over man. There's nothing in it but just right and holiness. It's just the purest of pure. Where mourning and sorrow and persecution can all be traded in for peace and for the presence of God.

And I realize that we are looking for that blessed hope and the glory. I realize that we're looking for our gathering together unto him. But I want us to remember and realize that he fully intends on making this come to pass.

What he said to these disciples, what the prophets have preached for years and for centuries, God fully intends on bringing to pass. The angels proclaimed when Christ was born, peace on earth, goodwill to men.

He's going to sit on the throne of David and be called the son of the highest. And that hasn't happened. And there's so little written about our gathering together unto him and what we call the rapture.

And there's so much written about when the son of God gets his rightful place as king of kings and dominates and rules and righteousness.

[11 : 32] And I want to compare the promise that Christ gives to these men and affirms to these men of a better day. I want to compare it to something that's given to us.

If you would turn back toward the back of your Bible now to 2 Peter and find chapter number 3. Because there's something future that out there awaits us.

And I long to experience what this day is that Christ tells his disciples of. But there's something that goes even beyond that. And in 2 Peter 3, would you look down to verse number 9?

Where the Bible says, This is not the same as the day that he was talking about to his disciples.

But this is one that goes beyond that. Verse 11, Do you hunger and do you thirst for that day?

[13 : 46] Is that a longing inside of your heart for that day? Is there a longing within you for something better than the joy and the festivities and the temporary show of happiness and peace and giving and gratitude?

Because this is going to go in just a few weeks. But isn't there a longing inside of you for a day when we dwell in a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness?

And where much like the earlier day that Christ promised his disciples where they shall see God and be called the children of God. Paul tells us it will be manifest that we are the sons of God in that day.

And we shall see God and we shall see God and we'll behold him. And we'll dwell with him and he'll be our God and we'll be his people. But there's a better day and a better environment, an environment wherein dwelleth righteousness that's coming.

And tonight, don't look to the holiday season and the lights and the carols and the spreading of what I'm calling a temporary joy. Enjoy it and let it last as long as you can.

[15 : 01] But don't look to it. Look beyond it. And just like Christ affirmed to his followers, for us as children of God in Christ Jesus, the best is yet to come for us as well.

Now in 1 Peter 3, 2 Peter 3, three quick things here from this passage going on. I stopped at verse 13. Look at verse 14. The first charge is to be diligent.

In verse 14, wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent. That ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless.

Be diligent because that's the future that God has for us. A place wherein dwelleth righteousness where we are with our God. And if that's what he's promised to us, then be diligent to be looking for that and to be living for him today.

Don't be getting caught up with the sin of this world. Don't let that distract you and get in your heart. Make your daily walk with Jesus Christ a priority to you.

[16 : 08] Make it real to you. Don't let it slip. Take it serious. Make it real to you. Make it real. Be diligent. Secondly, in verse 17, beware.

Verse 17, ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

In 1 Peter chapter 5, he says, be sober. Be vigilant. Be vigilant. Because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour.

So beware, Christian. We have this day coming, but beware today. Don't let your guard down. Because you're going to be the one that regrets it if you do.

You're going to be the one that's hurting. And you're going to be the one that suffered loss. If you want to flip over just a page or two, in 2 John, this small little epistle, 2 John, in verse number 8, the Bible says, Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

[17 : 26] There's not a person in here that's been bought by the blood of Christ, that hasn't done something for Christ, that doesn't have something waiting for him or her. So be diligent and beware.

You don't want to let that stuff slip. You don't want to let it slide. And then one more thing from 2 Peter 3 is be growing. In verse 18, Peter says, Don't be growing and concerned and consumed with money and power.

Be concerned and consumed with growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I believe that the more you grow in Christ, the more that you'll start and be, you'll see that this world has got nothing for you.

The more you grow, the more you grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, you'll start to see your eyes will be open. This world offers you pleasures. But those things are fake.

Those things don't last. And those things come with some consequences. We've already learned that, haven't we? Some of us have been through some things. So we start to learn that the joys of this world are just propped up.

[18 : 51] And they're going to fall away. And there's something better for us. There's something for us like to borrow from Christ's teaching to his 12.

We're going to inherit some things too. And we're going to see God. And we're going to be comforted from all the persecutions or from all of the sorrows and from all of anything that we've faced or endured in this life.

And best of all, from the verse that I read a few times, we're going to be filled. If you hunger and thirst for righteousness, when you get to bathe in the holiness of God, you will experience a filling.

A filling like you've never tasted in this world. Coming to church, getting in the word of God, having his spirit in you, being filled with the spirit.

All of these things are good, but you know what you haven't gotten rid of yet? You haven't gotten rid of that old man. He hasn't gone anywhere yet, but he will. In the future, he'll be gone.

[19 : 55] And in the future, like you reread in the psalm, the wicked are going to be gone. They're going to be cut off. Their presence won't be on the table anymore as you go through your day-to-day, so to speak.

You're going to inherit some things, and you're going to be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. So I want to conclude these thoughts here tonight by exhorting you.

Just because this world is not our home, don't take this and then turn it into where you despise the opportunities that you have to serve Jesus Christ.

And don't despise the opportunities he gives you to suffer for him. And don't despise the opportunities to speak up for him and to tell somebody else about the Lord Jesus Christ, because the opportunities to do this are limited.

Your days are numbered. The best is yet to come. Righteousness is around the corner, and we're going to love it. But now's the time to be busy working.

[21 : 03] Now's the time to be plugged in. Not seeking this world's pleasure and joys and false frills, but going after what Jesus Christ has given us to do.

Enjoy the season. Use it to minister for the Lord Jesus Christ. And do what you can knowing that the day awaits us when we're going to dwell with him and all of these opportunities are going to cease.

And we'll be glad when it's over, but let's not regret that we didn't do what we could. We're going to lay our burdens down, and we're going to rest and live in his presence.

But let's make sure there's something waiting for us on the other side. So I wanted to just throw those little thoughts together. And maybe the next time you read from Matthew chapter 5, it'll stir your heart a little bit, considering that if you hunger and thirst for that righteous life and that righteous society and environment, it's coming.

It's absolutely coming. You shall be filled. Amen. Amen. All right, let's close in prayer, and then we'll be dismissed. Lord, we long for that day. We believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

[22 : 18] We believe what your word says, that we have eternal life, and we've been justified from all things. We believe that the future holds great things for us.

And Lord, thank you for that hope and for giving us that energy to go off of that and to endure. And help us, God, to face tomorrow with cheerful hearts, with joy inside.

Help us to face this week and the challenges of life and of family and of the lost and of the wicked and of sin and of our own flesh and our own problems.

Help us to face it, being led by your Spirit, looking forward to that blessed hope.