

Righteous Hunger and Thirst

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[0:00] Our scripture readings this morning will be taken from Isaiah 55 and Matthew 5, 1 through 6. Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money, come, buy and eat.

Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear and come to me, hear that your soul may live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and a commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you. Because of the Lord your God and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found.

[1:21] Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth.

It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and I shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace.

The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress. Instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle, and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

[2:40] Matthew 5, 1 through 6. Seeing the crowds, he ran upon the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Here ends the scripture readings.

Good morning. Good morning. Thank you, Brother David. Perhaps like many of you, I grew up in a fairly large family.

As a matter of fact, my mother had, she gave birth to 11 children. I can only imagine that, frankly, having had two myself.

[3:50] That is true. That is true. That is true. You know, I couldn't argue against that. The truth is that, well, of the 11, one died fairly early, shortly after birth.

But it was just amazing, the 10 of us, how my mother actually was a full-time teacher, but she was also a full-time homemaker, in my estimation.

We didn't realize it at the time, but she was quite a woman. She would come home after school and after teaching any number of students, including some of us, actually.

So she would see us the entire day and discipline us at school and at home. It was just incredible. And she would come home and she would prepare meals for us and our father. And, frankly, he only cooked maybe twice per month. And he was fairly good at it, but he only cooked twice per month. And my mother did all the cooking and all the cleaning and she did all the work.

[5:11] But it was quite interesting. As she cooked, all of us would sit around the table and we would have our spoons. In our hands or forks or whatever.

And occasionally we would be banging the spoons on the tables. But always, and this is just amazing to me, we would all start singing.

How many of you sang just before you ate, when you were a child? We would sing. We literally sang for our supper.

I'm serious. Did anybody do that? Don't tell me I'm just alone. You didn't do that? You did that, right? Exactly. We sang. We sang. And what was so amazing is that our mother, she would feed us. And at the end of it, we would all be satisfied. No matter how hungry we were, we would all leave that table satisfied. And she did it day after day after day.

[6:11] What an amazing woman she was. Let's pray. Father, Lord, we need you in this hour.

Father, we are empty. We ask, O Lord, that you would fill us. We are blind, O Lord.

Lord, we ask that you would grant us sight. We are poor and needy. Lord, would you enrich us.

Enrich our hearts, we pray.

Cause your word, O Lord, to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. The beatitude that we come to this morning reminds me a great deal of those times living in Andros with our loving mother.

[7:16] We brought our famished bodies to the table. And she fed us to satisfaction each and every time.

In the passage we just read, Matthew, the wise, jurist, chronologer, pens the words of our Savior's first sermon, which has become known as the Sermon on the Mount.

And Jesus, in this sermon, does what most effective leaders would do during their inaugural message, if you will.

He lays out the character traits of those who would follow him, their distinguishing marks. It must have come as quite a surprise to those who listened to him, those who followed him on this occasion, who heard this first sermon, that he did not offer steps to riches or empowerment or self-rule or self-help.

Instead, up to this point in Jesus' sermon, he focused on the poor in spirit.

[9:01] He focused on those who mourn and the meek. For in spirit, Jesus said, one who knows that he is incapable of saving himself cries out to the Lord for mercy.

Jesus declares that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And those who mourn over their sins, Jesus says, they shall be comforted.

And the meek, the gentle, they shall inherit the earth. And now we come to the fourth beatitude where we find these words in Matthew 5 and verse 6.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. This beatitude is the apex, if you will, of the first three.

[10:17] It brings us to a place of seeing our sin and recognizing that it is only God's grace that can deliver us.

It's only as we hunger and thirst for his righteousness, as we see our need for God, as we mourn over our sin, that he guarantees grace and he delivers us.

Like the three preceding beatitudes, this one, the fourth, also has two parts.

Condition and the promise. Righteousness. But I wonder, when you think about hungering and thirsting, what comes to mind?

No doubt to the unregenerate mind, certainly not righteousness. Righteousness. And if you and I were to be honest, righteousness does not readily or immediately come to mind either.

[11:40] But it should. I believe that our examination of this text today would have been fruitful if our appetite for righteousness grows.

If our hunger and thirst for righteousness is ever present. Let me say that again. If we leave here today. And our appetite for righteousness grows.

If our hunger and thirst for righteousness is ever present. I believe that we will have done our jobs. This beatitude tells us, in a few words, that those who are desperate for righteousness are filled with righteousness.

Or as the ESV says, are satisfied with righteousness. Those who are desperate for righteousness are filled with righteousness.

[12:53] To help us navigate through this text, I've organized the sermon under two heads. Desperate for righteousness.

And filled with righteousness. Let's consider now. Desperate for righteousness.

Desperate for righteousness.

Desperate for righteousness. Desperate for righteousness. It's a desire. It's a pursuit. That's almost like giving someone, if you think about it.

There's Brother Josh. There he is. He just took an exam, so he'll understand this. That's almost like giving someone a perfect score. Not for passing the test.

[14:08] But simply for desiring to pass it. It points to the fact that true disciples of Christ know that apart from Christ, they are nothing at all.

True Christians know their righteousness is like filthy rags. True Christians want more of Christ.

The truth is, hunger and thirst are a part of the human condition. We hunger and thirst for things.

We hunger and thirst, of course, for food and water. We hunger and thirst for riches. Some for power. Some for influence.

Some for relationships. Some for other things as well. Jesus does not teach that we are blessed if we hunger for those things.

[15:28] We're not blessed when we hunger for blessings. That's not the teaching here. We're not blessed when we hunger for blessings.

Now, there are people who will teach you that we are blessed when we hunger for blessings. But that's not what he says here. Jesus says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Jesus uses an analogy here which we can readily relate to, to describe our desire for righteousness.

He didn't use something that we have no familiarity with. Jesus says, Jesus says, He said that we are not to hunger and thirst for happiness or for blessings.

He said that we are to hunger to get right with God. To get rid of sin. And we are called not only to get rid of sin on the outside, but on the inside as well.

[17:27] Jesus says, Jesus says, Jesus says, We must hunger and thirst for righteousness. Perhaps you've been so fortunate that you've not been desperately hungry or desperately thirsty.

Maybe that's true for most of us. If that is the case, though, I encourage you to consider images of people you may have seen on television from various countries or even people begging on our streets who were desperately hungry.

You will have seen clear and thirst for the people. You will have seen clear and evident malnourishment. But more specifically, the pursuit of the people you observed was singular.

Satiated their hunger and their thirst. That's it. Someone who is desperately hungry and thirsty has only one interest.

They want to satisfy their hunger and their thirst. Everything else pales in comparison. Everything else is a distant second when someone is hungry and thirsty.

[18:51] And Jesus tells us that that ought to be the posture of a disciple. Hungry and thirsty for righteousness. Nothing else comes close.

When one is hungry and thirsty, it is hard to concentrate on much else. Until those desires are met.

This is where Jesus says we ought to be. Hungry and thirsty. You're aware of it. It's not going away. It cannot be dismissed.

Your hunger can't be dismissed. It can't be ignored. It can't be substituted with anything else. It must be satisfied. Indeed, attempts to dismiss it or to ignore it.

Or to substitute one's hunger or thirst for anything but food or water will lead to more hunger and to more thirst.

[19:59] But how do we get to this place of being hungry and thirsty for righteousness that Jesus talks about here?

Interestingly, we get to a place of hunger for food and thirst for water quite naturally. Just a passage of time.

Everybody believes that. You can confirm that. You don't eat for a while. You're going to be hungry and you are thirsty. That's natural. That happens ordinarily. Just a passage of time causes one to become hungry and thirsty.

The longer you stay away from food, the hungrier you become. The longer you stay away from something to drink, from liquid, the thirstier you become.

It's interesting though because that's not quite the same way righteousness works. Unlike a hunger for food which depends or deepens the less of it we have, our hunger for righteousness is actually lessened as we get less of it.

[21:31] How many of you can relate to that? The less we pursue righteousness, the less we consider it, the more we stay away from church gatherings, the less we read our Bibles, the less we pray, the less our desire for righteousness.

We see here that disciples though, as a disciple of Christ, we are called to be hungry and thirsty for righteousness.

How do we do that? I want to suggest a few things to you. I think that righteousness is cultivated through our knowledge of God and who we are.

When we know who he is, a holy God, perfect in all of his ways. One who cannot stand sin.

It helps us to see what we ought to be. It's cultivated by our understanding of why Christ had to die.

[22:58] When we understand that Jesus Christ had to die in order to bridge the gap between us and God. When we understand that he was the only one declared righteous.

It helps us to pursue righteousness ourselves. A hunger and thirst for righteousness deepens.

When we understand why the Holy Spirit came. But we indeed do have a helper. Who has come to help us.

To become holy. I want to tell you. That our pursuit of righteousness.

Our hunger and thirst for righteousness. It's helped. When we consider the lives of others. When we see others fall into sin.

[24:12] And shame. Our pursuit of righteousness. Deepens because we say, Lord. But for the grace of God there go I.

We say to ourselves. We raise our hands and we say, Lord. Please. Let that not be. My. Faith.

Help me. Hunger and thirst for you, Lord. We hunger as we examine God's word through a mirror. As though it were a mirror.

Reading and listening to God's word. With an eye to be adjusted. That's how we hunger and thirst. And we hear God's word preached to us.

And we are challenged by God's word. Say, Lord. I hear that. Lord. Help me to become what your word has said I ought to be.

[25:18] We hunger and thirst. As we acknowledge and as we confess our sins. Lord. Forgive me.

Help me, Lord. Help me with this battle. This challenge. We hunger and thirst. As a brother comes along and encourages us.

We hunger and thirst for righteousness. When we see this world for what it is. When we see that the things, the pleasures of this world are fleeting.

Jesus says, Jesus says, blessed are those.

Hunger. Thirst. For righteousness. Hunger and thirst for righteousness. For they shall be filled.

Hunger and thirst for righteousness.

[26:25] So you would be wise to ask, Jesus, what is it that you're really talking about? When you talk about righteousness, what precisely are you

talking about?

There are two types of righteousness. Some would perhaps say three.

But I want to just narrow in on two types of righteousness that I think Jesus is specifically talking about here. One is what we would call legal righteousness.

And the other, we might summarize as moral righteousness. I want to perhaps let's talk a little bit about those in the second half of our message.

But for right now, just bear in mind that Jesus is calling us to hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

[27:41] Jesus tells us that we must cultivate an insatiable desire for those things. And as we do, he says that we will be satisfied.

We will be filled. Let's transition now to part two, section two of our message.

Filled with righteousness. The promise that accompanies the command for us to hunger and to thirst for righteousness is that we will be satisfied.

King James says that we will be filled. But how does that happen? What is Jesus here really talking about?

The construction of this beatitude clearly shows that the accent is not on what you and I do, but rather it is on what God does.

[29:11] Listen to it very carefully. Jesus says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

They shall be satisfied. So what Jesus is saying is that you come to the table with your hunger and with your thirst, and you're going to be satisfied.

Isn't that what he is saying? He says that you shall be satisfied. You bring your emptiness to the table, and you leave filled, leave satisfied.

So the accent is not on what we do, but what God does. Yes, we have some responsibility, if you will, too.

But the clear accent, the greater burden, the greater load, the incomparable load, frankly, is on God.

[30:21] But we talked earlier that we said earlier that there are two types of righteousness, at least two, that are in view here.

A legal righteousness being the first. Now what do we mean when we talk about a legal righteousness? We hear talking about justification.

Being just before God. We will know that because of our sin, because of Adam's sin, that we were estranged from God.

We were enemies. And God sent his son to die for our sins. Because he's a holy God, and he can't tolerate sin.

And he says to us, Believe on his son. And those who believe, he clothes them in the righteousness of his son.

[31:37] You see, we are filled by God when we come to him hungry for righteousness. But we know from the scriptures that no one comes to the Father unless the Spirit draws him.

So in a real sense, God gives us hunger for him. And he satisfies us before him legally.

He gives us the appetite. And he feeds us as well.

And he declares us righteous. Notice here that this is a one-time walk. This is a one-time walk.

This justification that Jesus talks about here. This is a one-time walk. Romans 3.10-12 says, Paul writes, As it is written, none of us is righteous.

[32:56] No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good.

Not even one. This is a Bible that we read and believe. And Paul says, in other words, Paul says, that there is not one who was hungry.

That's, we can boil it down to that. Paul says that it's not natural for us to be hungry for God. It's not natural for us to be righteous.

It's not, we can't in and of ourselves be worthy. And so, those of us who come to him, he's come to him because he calls us, because he draws us, because he gives us the desire.

He causes us to be hungry and thirsty for righteousness. Romans 3, 26 tells us that God justifies.

[34:10] It is he who justifies. It is he who declares us righteous. All those who put their faith in Jesus, so he gives us what we need.

He gives us the food that we need to put our faith in Jesus. We are declared righteous by faith alone in Christ alone.

All those who are saved are filled with righteousness. No more saving. It is a finished work.

But then there is another kind of righteousness that is in view here. And it's holiness.

Holiness. The two words the word that we think about a lot when we talk about holiness is sinlessness which we cannot attain and we also often think about sanctification which is being set apart, being distinct, different.

[35:46] 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 16 tells us as believers that we ought to be holy because the Lord is holy.

We are instructed as believers to be holy as the Lord is holy. And 1 Thessalonians 3 tells us that sanctification is God's will for us.

Although you and I who are believers are declared righteous before God, sin remains in us and we must come to the table of mercy all the time.

In this regard, we can perhaps restate Jesus' message of saying those who are hungry and thirsty for holiness will be filled with holiness.

this begins and this walk begins and ends with desire planted by the Holy Spirit.

[37:19] Yes, we have work to do. We have work to do, but make no mistake as we have said earlier that the greater part of the walk is done by the Holy Spirit who convicts us of sin.

In a very old edition of Tabletalk Magazine, we find these words. I'm going to read extensively for what it says.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us from inside out. All sin is first a matter of the mind and heart before it is a matter of behavior.

All sin is a matter of the mind and the heart before it is a matter of behavior. The Holy Spirit walks on our consciences, convicting us of sin and righteousness, moving us to repent.

He transforms us by the renewing of our minds according to the word of God. We study the doctrine and ethics of scripture so that the spirit can change our thinking and our affections and over time this changes our behavior.

[38:41] More and more we die to sin and live to righteousness but we will never attain perfection because before we enter glory.

None of us can ever say we are without sin. still by the spirit we can make real progress in holiness. And Jesus says to us that we should hunger and thirst for righteousness. We should hunger and thirst for holiness because we shall be filled.

And what Jesus is saying to us is that we come to the table and we get a filling at the table but the truth is that this hunger and this filling it's an ongoing process.

It's a continual thing. It never stops. It never ceases. The more holy we become the more righteous we become the more unrighteous the more unholy we realize we are.

[39:54] What a paradox. The more holy we become the more unholy we realize that we are.

Can I tell you what that relates to? You know what it reminds me of? A child who goes into grade one and he's taught his ABCs and suddenly he believes he knows everything from his perspective that's all he sees and finally he can read and everything he knows when he gets into university and he's pursuing his PhD and he realizes oh my there is so much more I don't know and that's just the way it is with us brothers and sisters so we this is an ongoing pursuit you know I will never stop Jesus is saying to us by these words that the force of our will not get us there we need something external to ourselves how amazing is that human limitation clearly is on display we need the work of the

Holy Spirit we need to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ there was a young man which you all know very well in exile he would be king and he wrote these words recorded in Psalm 42 as the dare pants for the flowing streams so pants my soul oh God my soul thirsts for God for the living God and then David wrote those words David was in the midst of major challenge in his life but what was pressing to him was being in the sanctuary being before the Lord being able to raise his hands with his brothers and sisters

David writes as the deer pants for the flowing streams so my soul oh Lord pants after you but to God that you and I would be at that place where our soul would pant for the Lord as the deer thirsty! dear pants for flowing streams and in the New Testament the apostle Paul writes in Philippians 3 verses 10 through 11 that I may know him here is a man who's written much of the New Testament taken the gospel to the Gentiles and he writes after years and years of ministry that I may know him and the power of his resurrection I may share his suffering becoming like him in his death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead man pursuing righteousness hungry and thirsty for righteousness what about you and me what about us are you hungry are you thirsty for righteousness or are you forever satisfied

[44:12] Jesus Christ is the bread of life he's the living water as David writes in David read sorry in Isaiah 55 the Lord said to the prophet and he says to us through the prophet come everyone who thirsts come to the waters and he who has no money come buy and eat come buy wine and milk without money and without price why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourself in rich food here the

Lord invites us to come and to fill ourselves with the bread of life and to drink living water because there is no substitute that's the point of what Isaiah writes here there is no substitute come everyone who thirsts come to the waters and he who has no money because this is not something that we can pay for this is not something that you and I can earn without money and without price in a moment we got to sing a song that we often sing during communion we hunger and thirst that song reminds us of our saviour sacrifice and what our response ought to be to hunger and to thirst for the

Lord the song writer says that the cup we drink the bread we eat reminds us you're all we need and makes us long for your wedding feast feast the cup we drink the bread we eat reminds us you're all we need and makes us long for your wedding feast Jesus we hunger and thirst for you Lord as we remember your sacrifice we see the wounds from your hands and past side extravagant love oh how great the price now our lives are yours our lives are yours what love is this that you lay your life down for us oh what love oh what love as we heard the promise of

Jesus the promise of Jesus is that we will be filled even as we continue in our hungry state that's the promise of Jesus Jesus says to us yes you are a disciple but you still need to come to the table and to be filled the promise of Jesus is that we will be filled even as we continue in our hungry state but revelation chapter 7 verses 16 to 17 tells us that there is coming a day when we shall hunger no more!

Listen to what John writes they shall hunger no more neither thirst anymore the shun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat for the lamb is in the midst of the throne he will be their shepherd and he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes brothers and sisters this is what you and I have to look forward to there is coming a day when all of our hunger will be satiated that we will thirst no more we will shed this body of pain and sin for when he doth appear we shall be like him and the saints of

[49:48] God say come Lord Jesus come quickly blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled let us pray God this is a marvelous a marvelous promise that you've given to us marvelous promise that you have given to us you give us the desire give us the promise give us the help you give us all that we need father we confess that we have not always hungered thirsted for righteousness as we are we've hungered and we've been thirsty for other things oh lord we've given them priority lord forgive us oh lord cause each one present those who don't know you lord by your grace cause them to hunger and thirst for justification only you can do that lord those who do know you lord in the name of Jesus we pray lord that you would so fill us with with a hunger and thirst for you this day and in the ensuing days and weeks and months and years to come but everything else lord will pale in comparison lord light a flame in our hearts we pray in Jesus name and all God's people say amen