“Blessed Are They Who Hunger And Thirst”

Introduction. The Christian’s task is to view life through the lens of the gospel. The trouble with mankind is not any one specific manifestation of sin, but the whole realm of sin itself. This beatitude spells out the only way to real peace. If every man and woman knew what it was to “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” there would be no problems with war.

In reality, the gospel, which seems so remote and indirect in its approach, is actually the most direct way of solving the problem. If righteousness exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34), then we need to discover the meaning of righteousness.

Again, this beatitude appropriately follows the others. Up to this point, the beatitudes have been negative, dealing with the individual and causing him to look at himself. Now, we begin to look at matters in a more positive light. Here we look for a solution.

The whole world is seeking for happiness. It is the ultimate motive behind every act and ambition, behind all work and effort. Everything is designed for happiness, but the beatitude says that we are not to hunger and thirst after happiness. But that is what most people are doing. When we desire happiness, it mostly eludes us. Jesus said that the ones who are to be congratulated are those who seek righteousness. Put happiness in the place of righteousness and you will never get it; you will spend your life seeking something that you can never find.

I. ***“Blessed Are They Which Do Hunger And Thirst After Righteousness”***

A. In this beatitude, Jesus turns one of the elemental human instincts to spiritual use. Hunger and thirst are not passing feelings. They are deep and profound and go on until it they are satisfied -- they hurt. The words are used metaphorically to mean, “to crave ardently, to seek with eager desire.” It means to be desperate, to feel life is ebbing out, and to realize the urgent need of help. David and the other psalmists were well acquainted with this feeling (Psalm 27:4; 38:9; 42:1-2; 51:7; 63:1-2; 73:25; 119:20, 131).

B. Those who have worldly desires will not have a hunger for righteousness, and a lot of people hunger and thirst for what is wrong.

1. Amnon hungered after Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-2).
2. The rich fool hungered after material possessions (Luke 12:21).
3. The chief rulers longed for the approval of the Pharisees (John 12:42).
4. Simon believed the gospel but he longed for power (Acts 8:18-19).
5. On the other hand, the queen of Sheba came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and the men of Nineveh

repented at the preaching of Jonah (Matthew 12:41-42). In the parable of the pearl of great price, the merchant was willing to sell all he had for the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:45-46).

C. Righteousness is "whatever is right or just in itself, whatever conforms to the will of God" or "integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting." Righteousness is a longing to be positively holy.
   1. Some people desire the righteousness of the law of Moses (Romans 9:31), or their own righteousness (Philippians 3:9), but this beatitude teaches Christians to pursue the righteousness of God (Matthew 6:33), and thereby exemplify all of the beatitudes everyday.
   2. All troubles are caused by the fact that the world is influenced by sin (Romans 7:17; Ephesians 2:2), and this beatitude tries to instill a desire to be free from sin's separating effects (Proverbs 15:29; Isaiah 1:15). If I am going to live by this beatitude, then the supreme desire in my life will be to know God and be in fellowship with Him (John 12:35-36).

D. The person who is hungering and thirsting as Jesus said obviously avoids everything that is opposed to righteousness.
   1. Man has come up with a lot that is diametrically opposed to God and His righteousness (Ecclesiastes 7:29; cf. Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; Revelation 21:8; 22:15). I know I cannot live perfectly like Jesus, but I can stop walking in the gutters of life.
   2. If we are truly hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we will not only avoid sin, but we will also avoid what dulls or takes the edge off our spiritual appetites. There is a lot that is harmless in and of itself, but if we spend too much time with it and less time with God, we are not hungering and thirsting after righteousness.
      a) People who hunger and thirst after righteousness know what it is like to spend time in prayer and meditation, reminding themselves of what they are and what they need.
      b) Do we spend as much time with the Bible as we do with the computer or books, or with movies or television? The person who has the time for these should have the time for the Bible.
   3. The Christian who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness always puts himself in the way of obtaining it. Blind Bartimaeus could not give himself sight, but he put himself in the right place at the right time (Mark 10:46-52).
      a) We should never miss an opportunity of being in those places where people find righteousness.

b) Someone seeking righteousness will not have to be nagged to come to worship, Bible classes, gospel meetings, Christian friend's homes, etc. Plainly speaking, if we are weak, it is our own fault (Acts 17:27; Colossians 3:2).

II. ***"For They Shall Be Filled"***

A. These words are very strong and graphic, originally applied to the feeding and fattening of animals in a stall (Matthew 14:20; Revelation 19:21).

1. "Filled" means to "fulfill or satisfy the desire of any one." It is a very appropriate word to show the complete satisfaction of spiritual hunger and thirst (Isaiah 55:2). Paradoxically, fulfillment produces more hungering and thirsting after righteousness.
2. Righteousness is obtained through faith and obedience (Romans 1:16; 6:16; 10:4, 10; Philippians 3:7), and all that is enjoyed now is a foretaste of what God has prepared for those that love Him (1 John 3:1-2; 2 Peter 3:13). In that day we will be finished with sin forever (Revelation 7:16; 21:22-23).

B. One who hungers and thirsts will make inquiries (Jeremiah 6:16).

1. Those who seek spirituality and believe in Christ will be filled (Matthew 7:7-11; John 6:35; Acts 8:26-31; Hebrews 6:4-5; 1 Peter 2:2-3).
2. Likewise, those who seek worldliness will be filled (Proverbs 1:24-31; Hosea 10:13), but that fulfillment is the wrong kind and will lead to eternal destruction (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Conclusion. A good appetite is usually a mark of good health (Hebrew 5:12–14; 1 Peter 2:2). Is hungering and thirsting after righteousness the deepest longing of your soul? Can you honestly say that you desire to know God and to be like the Lord, to be rid of self in every shape and form, and to live always to His glory and His honor above everything else in this world?

So why should we care? What is the point of it all? Because your appetite will be the cause of your salvation or your damnation. It is only this righteousness that can prepare us to be right with God and go to heaven. How amazing it is that this is not the supreme desire in the life of everybody! If only we saw what we are guilty of in the sight of God and His holiness, we would hate sin as He does.

Also, if we only knew something of the glory and the wonder of the new life of righteousness, we would desire nothing else. Look at the lives of Jesus' followers. Would you not like to live and die like them? Is there any other life than the one that bears the fruit of the Spirit in holy living? What life! What character! That is life as it should be. Is this your desire today? If you want to be filled and happy, do it now while we offer the invitation.