

# The Beatitudes: Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness



The Transformation for Adult LifeGroups

When I hunger and thirst for righteousness, I'm in position to understand and grow toward God's holiness.

Matthew 5:6

June 30, 2019

## TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Matthew 5:6**

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

## FIRST THOUGHTS

God created us with an instinctive drive for being filled with satisfaction, and there are numerous ways that people seek this out. Yet, in the Sermon on the Mount, we are given clear direction for moving in this direction. The filling that is mentioned here includes an increasing true fulfillment while here on earth that will be made complete in heaven.

A quick search on how people find fulfillment shows us how people strive in the pursuit of satisfaction in life that include career goals, personal development goals, relationship goals, health goals, and financial freedom (among several others). But we know from experience and observation that when we run after these, we either don't get there and are disappointed or we achieve them, but somehow still need more to feel satisfaction.

Setting goals is extremely popular as a way to get to satisfaction. **What are the most popular goals people set for New Year's? What do these goals tell us about what people think will bring them satisfaction?**

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The prevailing belief for Jews in the first century was that Gentiles were not righteous because they were sinners. Yet the Jewish leaders believed themselves to have attained righteousness before God because they had kept the Mosaic Law. Jesus, in His parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, describes this in Luke 18:11-12: "11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'"

While it is great not to be an extortioner, unjust, adulterer, and it is right to fast and tithe, it is possible to do all of this and still miss being filled in the way God created us to be. A man like this may be "religiously well-behaved," but he doesn't get the true meaning when God talks of righteousness.

Today we are going to look at this verse in two parts:

- 1) RIGHTEOUSNESS CHRIST GIVE US
- 2) RIGHTEOUSNESS TO WHICH GOD CALLS US

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### RIGHTEOUSNESS CHRIST GIVES US

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS DEFINED

- This word righteousness means "approval by God" and "what is deemed right by God."
  - As we get started, first think about how much you believe that God approves of you. And on what basis does God approve of you?
  - Have you ever had times when intellectually you felt that God approved of you, but had a sinking feeling in the back of your mind that maybe He doesn't approve of you?
    - As we look at this first point regarding the "righteousness Christ gives us," consider what it means to truly be approved by God. Look at how God defines this in His Word as we continue.

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS EXPLAINED

- The Bible speaks of the righteousness that Christ gives us. Christ is righteousness. 1 Corinthians 1:30 tells us: *"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."*
- Paul describes his experience and understanding in **Philippians 3**, saying: *"<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith."*

- What is the difference between pursuing self-righteousness and longing for Christ's righteousness?
- What can Christ's righteousness accomplish that my own version of righteousness cannot?
- As Paul mentions that everything else is considered a loss compared to surpassing worth of knowing Christ. What makes this a difficult concept to live out in life?

## RIGHTEOUSNESS TO WHICH CHRIST CALLS US

### RIGHTEOUSNESS DEFINED

- Hungering and thirsting for righteousness is what Jesus calls us to. "Christ gives us righteousness" to have new life and be approved by God. And "Christ calls us to righteousness" as a day-to-day way of living. It is important to grasp the distinction between these two.
- To all who are in Christ, God gives His Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts and creates within us a new, deep desire to live in a way that is pleasing to Him. Christ's people hunger and thirst for righteousness because although we know we're forgiven and accepted (approved by God) on the basis of all Jesus is and has done, *we also know how far we are from what Christ calls us to be.*
- Read Matthew 13:44. What does this short parable teach us?
- On a scale of 1-10, how much do you hunger or a thirst to be righteous?
- What have you been doing to pursue righteousness?
- Have you ever fallen into the trap of religious behavior modification and found yourself still dissatisfied in the end?
- What does your life look like when you are pursuing righteousness? Have you experienced that sense of being filled by God?

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

As we've discussed the hunger and thirst for righteousness that Jesus calls us to, a question arises. What can we do to cultivate a greater hunger and thirst that is not simply behavioral changes but is a genuine desire for righteousness?

Colin Smith tells of an account in his book Momentum. He says this.

Some time ago when I was preaching on this fourth Beatitude, a lady in our congregation made this comment: "Hunger is natural, but an appetite can be cultivated." That is a very useful distinction. Hunger for righteousness arises from within, and it's formed by the Holy Spirit in the soul of every person who's been born again, but an appetite can and should be cultivated. When Paul said, "Train yourself for godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7), he clearly communicated that we can choose to do some things that will help us move forward in a life that's pleasing to God.

- What are some appetites you would like to curb, and how will you go about curbing them?
- What are some ways you have in your life to cultivate a hunger for righteousness? List five here. If you have fewer than five, how can you make space in your life for more?

The psalms are full of truths that are expressed poetically. The psalmists often explained aspects of God's nature and of our lives in artistic and memorable terms. One of these is Psalm 42. Read through this slowly and underline the phrases that stand out to you. Answer these three questions as you read Psalm 42:

1. What is God telling me to believe?
2. What is God telling me to do?
3. How can I put this into practice this week?

## PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- As you read God's Word this week, ask Him to help you identify appetites that aren't helpful in cultivating a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Ask Him also to lead you away from those appetites and toward ones that are helpful. Remember that God is a good Father. Whatever your spiritual starting point is, don't let that be a hindrance. What God is most interested in is the direction you are going.
- Next week we will talk about being merciful. Read Jesus' teaching on mercy in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)

## READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

**29th** – Amos 4-6; Psalm 86; Titus 1 | **30th** – Amos 7-9; Psalm 104; Titus 2 | **1st** – Isaiah 1-3; Titus 3 | **2nd** – Isaiah 4-5; Psalm 115-116; Jude | **3rd** – Isaiah 6-7; 2 Chronicles 26-27; Philemon | **4th** – 2 Kings 15-16; Hosea 1; Hebrews 1 | **5th** – Hosea 2-5; Hebrews 2