

Blessed are they that Hunger & Thirst for Righteousness for they will be Filled

Matthew 5:6

HPC
Trinity Class
March 23, 2025

Many of the people who heard these words spoken by Jesus were probably trying to match them with their own experiences in the Jewish world of first century Galilee. In fact, the Beatitudes ("blessings") are often the opposite of what usually garners acclaim and popularity. For the faithful Jew, that meant following the guidelines given in the Torah, the first five books we Christians have in our Bible today. But Jesus points out that the Torah is of man, and that it's through Christ alone that we have a right relationship with God! The Apostle Paul spells this out in his letter to the Philippians. **[READ PHP3:7-11]**

In other words, in Christ we have an actual righteousness--

an actual right-relatedness--with God. Later (MT 6:1-8) Matthew shows us the difference between religious rites and a genuine hunger for God.

Give some examples in today's world of "religious rites."

SO

....who was Jesus addressing in this Sermon on the Mount?

We don't know for sure. The Bible tells us simply that it was a crowd, a throng, or a mob (ὄχλος). This included "his disciples" (5:1), though we don't know how many were there.¹

¹ Using only the Gospel of Matthew as our guide we know that he now had at least four disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, and John (MT 4:18-22). Jesus was also acquiring a reputation throughout Galilee as a preacher and healer. **[READ MT 4:23-25]**

- It was most likely a Jesus-friendly crowd, with no Roman soldiers or Temple leaders being mentioned.

...and where was this "mount?" Again, we don't know. Even the corresponding Hebrew and Aramaic words give us only a hint by saying "the hill country."² This throng of the curious came to Jesus because of what they had heard from others, but they also came because of what some had witnessed.

[READ MT 4:24]

Notice that this was no simple, quick speech! It may have taken several days; the recorded words of Jesus' sermon(s) extend all the way to MT 7:28. (This is very apparent in a "red-letter" edition of the Bible.) In the end, the author notes that the crowds (plural) were amazed.

In vs. 6 the word "righteousness" means right-relatedness. Jesus' emphasis here did not mean that we need a right-relatedness with the Torah. [That is what a Jewish audience would have expected from a rabbi.] Rather, we need a right-relatedness with God.

Many in Jesus' audience could, no doubt, associate with the words "hunger and thirst."

In modern society the key question of the day is often, "What's for dinner?"--in ancient Galilee it was more likely, "Will we eat today?" Likewise, traveling through sparsely populated desert regions without enough water was tantamount to death. Jesus uses the universal emotions of hunger and thirst to emphasize that "the righteousness for which men and women long is the ability to live out one's days in conformity to God's will."³

Jesus tells us that this intense desire, this hunger and thirst for God, and this passion to pursue His righteousness is a hallmark of a true believer.

² Carson, fn., pg. 129

³ Mounce, pg. 40.

The psalmist puts it in simple, beautiful terms, as one who has been deprived of being close to God-- [READ PS 42:1-2].

We have all experienced physical hunger. It's an indicator that our body has an absence of food, and if unfulfilled it becomes uncomfortable, then painful. Jesus takes this motif a step further by saying that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed. The key word here is "righteousness." They are the ones who have a deep longing for both personal holiness and justice for the oppressed.⁴

Paul was near the end of his ministry when he wrote to the Philippian church. He was Jesus' strongest and most loyal believer, and yet, in spots this letter to the Philippians could easily have been written by someone who was still seeking Christ.

[READ PHP 3:10-11].

Paul's statement, "I want to know Christ" surprises us. If this great apostle didn't think he knew Christ, how can we? Jesus tells us that the ones who are blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. In other words, the blessed ones are NOT those who think they have righteousness, but those who feel they lack righteousness.

"Here's what it feels like to be a Christian:

You don't feel that you have arrived,"⁵

and you find yourself longing to be more like Christ than you are now.

Consider the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They saw themselves as "blessed" and as paragons of virtue, though Jesus thought otherwise. They were like some individuals today, fully content in their own sins.

Do you know of such people in your life?

*They're usually the ones who are "self-made,"
have it all together, don't need some imaginary
ancient god messing up their lives with guilt.*



⁴ Zondervan, fn. to 5:6, pg. 1937.

⁵ Smith, from his sermon on the Beatitudes.

Yet, the blessing of God is real, and it belongs to those who are not content to remain as they are, but who have a strong desire to grow in righteousness.

SOMETHING TO REFLECT ON: "The flesh never hungers after righteousness. It wants to go and sin. If you hunger for righteousness, thank God for it."⁶

Rev. Colin Smith gives us an eye-opening thought about today's society:

Go into any Christian bookstore and you will find what those who profess

to be Christians are seeking: books about: happy families and growing churches. **But what about**

righteousness? Isn't there at least some material here about hungering and thirsting for Christ's blessings?

Unfortunately, "you will not find ten books on the pursuit of a righteous life in the Christian bookstore."⁷

It all boils down to one final question:

"Do I have an all-consuming passion to be righteous, or have I been substituting something else for righteousness?"

What is the correct answer?

Jesus said:

#1. We are righteous if we hunger and thirst to be blessed ???

or

#2. We are blessed if we hunger and thirst to be righteous ???

YOU CHOOSE

O God, I have tasted Your goodness,
and it has both satisfied me and made me
thirsty for more.

I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace.
I am ashamed of my lack of desire.

O God, the Triune God, I want to want you.
I long to be filled with longing;
I thirst to be made more thirsty still.

Show me Your glory, I pray, that I may know You indeed.
Begin in mercy a new work of love within me.
Say to my soul 'Rise up my love and come away.'

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Then give me the grace to rise and follow You,
up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long.

In Jesus' name, Amen.⁸

WORKS CITED

- Carson, D. A., contributor to *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8. Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, 1984.
- *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible, NIV*. AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN, 1996.
- *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1, "Beatitudes." Ed. by George A. Buttrick. Abington Press, Nashville, 1962.
- Mounce, Robert H. "Matthew." Part of the New International Biblical Commentary, Hendrickson Pub., Peabody, MA, 1991.
- Smith, Colin. "Momentum" on-line series, vol. 1. *Pursuing God's Blessings Through the Beatitudes*. <http://www.openthebible.org>.
- Tozer, A. W., *The Pursuit of God*. Moody Publishers, Chicago, 1948.
- *Trinity Hymnal*. Great Commission Publications, Atlanta, 1990.
- *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*. D.A. Carson, ed. Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, 2015.

527 The Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 5:3

Capo 1: ♯ (D) (Bm) (Em) (A) (D) ♯

1. Blest are the hum - ble souls that see their emp - ti -
2. Blest are the men of bro - ken heart, who mourn for
3. Blest are the meek, who stand a - far from rage and
4. Blest are the souls that thirst for grace, hun - ger and

(Em) (A) (D) (G) (A) (E⁷)

ness and pov - er - ty; trea - sures of grace to
sin with in - ward smart; the blood of Christ di -
pas - sion, noise and war; God will se - cure their
long for righ - teous - ness; they shall be well sup -

(A) ♯ (D) (D⁷) (Gma⁷) (D) (A) (D) ♯

them are giv'n, and crowns of joy laid up in heaven.
vine - ly flows, a heal - ing balm for all their woes.
hap - py state, and plead their cause a - gainst the great.
plied and fed, with liv - ing streams and liv - ing bread.

⁸ Tozer, pg. 15.