

**Mt 5:3-12 “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

4 Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

7 Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

**10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

11 “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

6 Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

I would like to start with a question. It is answered in our text.

What is the primary drive that leads to happiness?

What drive must you have if you are to be truly happy?

Our text tells us. It is the **drive** for, the **ambition** for, the **hunger** for, the **thirst** for..... **righteousness**.

Think about this.

It is not the people who **chase happiness** who **become** happy. Isn't that odd? We have talked about happiness. I have gone out of my way to say that happiness is God's will for our lives. Our **ultimate** happiness is assured in the **future** and **presently** there is truth that runs under the surface of our lives that fuels our happiness **here and now**. We have covered this ground.

I have said that scripture teaches that our lives are to consist of this happiness. And we can receive this happiness as we live by faith. Today we will look at a **crucial element** of that hunger that leads to happiness.

We need to understand this very thoroughly. If you follow your seamer, or your heart, or the world's wisdom, or anything other than God's Word to make you happy, you will not be satisfied. You will not be filled. Pursuing

happiness as your **object** of desire will be a huge disappointment. That is why so many people with all the **money, sex or power** that they **could imagine** are so miserable. That is a tragedy. The **world pursues happiness** all the time but cannot find it, they cannot ultimately attain it. Happiness is not found by pursuing the immediate feeling of it.

Happiness is found by pursuing the **means** of it. And the means of it is the pursuit of **living rightly**. Whenever you put your immediate happiness before your immediate righteousness, your happiness is doomed for failure.

Think of an athlete. Which would make him more happy at any given instance? Eating a **donut** and **playing video games** with his friends, or running sprints, or hills, or drills that produce fatigue and pain? Obviously the **donut** would give greater immediate pleasure. But it would never lead to a greater happiness. But if that athlete wants the happiness of winning the medal in his sport, his path to that happiness is not found by pursuing happiness. It is found by pursuing **the path** that will **lead** to his happiness. The athlete does not lose sight of the ultimate happiness he desires. He does what he does for his happiness. But he must choose to pursue **the path** that will **lead** to a **greater happiness**, not the path of immediate happiness itself.

Now let's look quickly back at how we got here in our text. Our text today is the next logical step in progression to what came before it.

The first three beatitudes tend to be negative.

Being poor in spirit means seeing the **depth of our spiritual poverty**. We see that not only don't we live perfectly, but we are completely **unable** to do so. We experience a death to self, self effort, self hope, self dependence.

The second beatitude **sees us in tears**. We not only see our ineptitude and our powerlessness, but we are confronted with our **moral failure**. We see how bad we really are. We see sins effect on everything about us and about our world. And that is devastating.

Then we begin becoming **meek**. We begin saying, **my way does not work God**. I give up trying to do it my way, trying rule my life. I submit. I surrender. I invite your control, moment by moment, over my life.

That brings us to today's text. Now we begin to press ahead in a spiritual direction. We have turned the corner on repentance and are experiencing what it takes to **grow stronger** in the faith. We see the longing for what we **want** to be and what we **must** be.

Now who are these happy people? They are the ones that **hunger and thirst for righteousness.**

Now what is righteousness?

The Greek word means- **The quality, state, and characteristic of being in the right**¹

It is the full restoration of man to what he was created for. It is man restored to his right **position, condition** and **relationship**. It is when everything is right again. Given that that which is not right is a result of sin, I think Martyn Lloyd Jones is right when he says righteousness is the **desire to be free from sin in all its forms and in its every manifestation.**

Now there are some preachers who only focus on **justification** in this text. Remember justification is the **once and done** work that Christ has completed for every believer. When we are justified we are, in some ways, just as if we had never sinned. Our sin is removed and considered already punished by the punishment Christ took for it. Therefore **we are righteous**. And some teachers limit this text to just that application.

But there is a problem with that. The verb tense in the passage is **continuous**. So it must mean more than that.

There is nothing to stop us from applying a **continual** hunger for righteousness here. That is the hunger we see in **sanctification**. While **positionally** every believer is righteous in Christ, we are not always righteous in our actions and attitudes. In fact we are quite the opposite at times. But the happy person keeps cycling back to a **dissatisfaction** with one's life. We want to be more like Christ. In fact we want to be **just like Christ** in as far as we can be. So we keep coming back to this **dissatisfaction** over and over again. It is continual.

And while all this is happening we are longing for that one glorious day when we will see Jesus and be just like Him. That is the culmination of all the hunger. That will be in **glorification**.

So we have the righteousness of Christ in Justification.

We have this continual striving for righteous living in Sanctification

And we will finally attain righteous living Eternally in Glorification

¹ Bird, M. F. (2016). [Righteousness](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Now if we want to be like Adam and Eve prior to the fall, if we want **all made right**, if we want to be in that **right state** with God, we know several things must happen.

We must first be free of the condemnation of sin and the enmity which it has achieved. That is the only way we can be restored to fellowship with God so we can commune with God like Adam and Eve did in the garden. We must desire **that kind** of righteousness.

Look at all that is wrong in our lives. Is it not all the result of sin, either directly or indirectly? Look at our world. All the craziness and evil we see, is it not all the **result of sin** in one form or another? The only hope our world has is that more and more people would be changed from the **inside out** by the gospel. There is no hope for our world that will come **from the outside** in changes that can be produced **by human means**. Conservative politics will not give America the answer that America needs. No, the gospel is the only remedy for the sin problem that is at the heart of every other problem.

Notice that our mission and our hunger is not so much **external** as **internal** because the **problem** is not so much **external** as **internal**. Sin is our problem. Our longing for righteousness begins with the restoration of relationship with God through the work of Jesus Christ. That is the Gospel.

Then when our relationship with God is restored, sin still interrupts our lives. It destroys our **fellowship** with God. And we need that restored as well. This is not a **once and done** kind of thing. It is a continual battle with the flesh, the world and the devil. So we long for righteousness. We long for the absence of sin.

And as we continue to struggle, we recognize more and more that the greatest problem we have is that **we want** to sin. Even when Christ has promised that He has **unplugged us** from sin's **power cord**, sin cannot **make** a Christian do anything any more, we find we **still** have a problem.

I want to sin. I want to pursue instant pleasure apart from God instead of God himself. There are things I want **more** than righteousness. I cannot blame that on God. I cannot blame that on others. I cannot blame that on my circumstance. I cannot blame that on my personality. No **I** am that guy. **I** am the sinner.

So we cry out to God again. We come back over and over and over again. It is a continual process.

OK, that is the righteousness that is in focus, the desire to be free of sin and completely restored to God.

Now what is our attitude toward that righteousness?

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

Hunger and thirst.

You and I are not in the position where we normally have a drastic need of food or water. If we are thirsty, we are normally not far from an adequate supply of water, except maybe for Mark and Angie's house, from time to time. And if we are hungry we have an ample supply of food.

Really, think of a time when you were extremely thirsty, so thirsty that water was all you could think of.

I went backpacking once in the Savage forest. I had a good map, but there had been no rain for a long time. So, many of the water spots held no water. We had used up all our water the day before, so water became no longer a concern. It became our **only** concern. There was nothing more important than finding water. We were no longer looking for an overlook where we could see a wonderful view of the forest. We were looking for a place where water bubbled up from the earth. We walked a mile out of our way to find it. And when we finally found it, we rejoiced.

That is the kind of desire this is describing.

Think about hunger, **real** hunger. It is something deep in you. And it continues **unrelenting** until it is **satisfied**. It does not just **go away**. It is uncomfortable. It wrests our attention from us. It will not go unnoticed. This spiritual hunger is similar. It continues increasingly and causes us to feel desperate until it is filled.

Hungering and thirsting of this kind removes competing priorities. It clarifies for us what is **important** and what is **not**. It is not seen as an **option**. It is seen as the thing that **life depends upon**, as that thing that **we cannot live without**. And remember, this is not speaking of an ultra Christian. It is speaking of **every** Christian. It is talking about **you and me**.

What are **you** hungering for? Right now? What is a **compelling drive** in your life? What can you not go through a day and not think about? What must you **have** to be happy? What is that **thing**?

Do you want to know? It is simple. For a day make a note every 15 minutes of your primary thoughts. Write down what you did in the time you had free to

choose anything. You will fill your calendar and your mind with things you hunger for. Is it Christ? Is it a desire to be free of the sin that keeps you from Christ? Or is it something else?

This sermon this morning can be **just another sermon**. Or it can be a catalyst to greater growth, to a greater hunger for God. And you and I will determine **which it is**. It has little to do with how good the sermon is. It has much to do with **how hungry** we are for God, how serious we are about our walk with God. If we are willing to **do nothing**, we can expect to **get nothing**. It is normally only as we put what we hear into action that we see fruit. What do you hunger and thirst for?

Look what scripture says about hunger and thirst. Jesus is not introducing a new concept to these people.

Look what David said:

Psa 42:1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? ³My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?"

We know where David stood, at least in this moment. His soul was thirsty for God. He wanted His presence. He needed His guidance. He needed God desperately and he felt that need deeply.

Ps. 63:1 O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water.

This is exactly describing what Christ is talking about. David was one of the **happy people** because He was pursuing God, not as an **option**, but as a **must have**.

Ps. 119:20 My soul breaks with longing For Your judgments at all times.

Here is the person who comes to God **continually**, not as a discipline, but as a **desperate need**. I think if we were to tell David he needed to have his devotions he would have laughed at us. His life depended upon God. He relied upon God for His survival.

Look what Isaiah has to say about hunger and thirst.

Is 55:1-3

55 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for *what is not*

bread, And your wages for *what* does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is good*,

And let your soul delight itself in abundance.³ Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live;

Here we see the **alternatives**. We can go to **God** to quench our hunger, or we can choose those **other avenues** that we think will please us. The plea from Isaiah to us is “why would you go spend what you have to get something that will **not** meet your need when you could come to me **for free**. I will **give you** what you desire. I will **give you** what your heart really longs for?”

Oh the misery we spare ourselves when we really believe that. And the misery we extend when we will not bend our knee to God.

Isa. 26:9 With my soul I have desired You in the night, Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early;

We see that Isaiah had the same mentality as David. They longed for God. They saw their need of God. It was continually refreshed.

I mentioned earlier that this is a continual thing. We don't hunger and thirst once. It keeps happening. Think of it like this. I don't know what your favorite meal, but think of that. The last time you ate that meal, did you eat that meal until you were **sufficiently full**? Did that make you want that meal **never** again? After all, you were **filled** with it. No. The truth is your pleasant experience of having that meal makes you want to have it **over and over again**. That is how it is as we hunger for God, as we seek to be holy, as we seek to **know Christ** and be **like Him**, as we seek to conquer sin in our lives. We keep going back because **going back is so good**.

What Christ is describing in our text is well illustrated in the prodigal son story.

Luke 15:15

¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

This son is hungry. Hunger has driven him to desperation. Hunger drives him to move.

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself,

I love that phrase. When he came to himself. When he dealt realistically with the truth of himself. This reminds me of blessed are the poor in spirit. This son was finally poor in spirit. He had a hunger and he knew he could not fill it. **he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."**'

This is a picture of what those who hunger and thirst for righteousness **look like** and **what they do**. They feel their desperate need of resources from God that they **do not have themselves** and they **run to God** to get them. They no longer think another method will meet the deep need in their heart. There is no **happy path** anywhere else. The ideas of alternate happy paths have been exhausted and they did not turn out well. So the son **runs to the father** to be fed. And the **father runs to the son** in his happiness.

Hunger and thirst for **righteousness** is the **only ambition** that ultimately leads to ultimate and eternal happiness. Hunger and thirst for **happiness** will never produce that effect. The way to happiness is through spiritual hunger and thirst.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

OK so what is the result of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness? They will be filled. The ESV version says they will be satisfied. I like that one better.

I believe it was John McArthur who said this:

The Greek word for filled was frequently used of the feeding of animals until they wanted nothing more. They were allowed to eat until they were completely satisfied.

Jesus' divine pronouncement is that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be given total satisfaction. The giving of satisfaction is God's work, as the future passive tense indicates: they shall be satisfied. Our part is to seek; His part is to satisfy.

When we hunger and thirst for righteousness, when **what we want most** is to be like Jesus, to be the **person we were created to be**, to rid ourselves of the sinful vestiges and live in a way that **pleases Christ**, the promise is that **we will be satisfied**. And this is not just future.

This is a promise. We always have **about as much of Christ** as what we really want. Because when we hunger and thirst for Christ, we get filled with that which we desire.

But again, we need to make sure we are not hungering and thirsting for blessedness, for happiness. Our text is talking about **where happiness comes from** and it is from a deep and growing relationship with Christ. Now just so we don't think this is the only place where the satisfaction from the hand of God is promised let's look at these verses.

Ps. 107:8,9

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 9 For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

Psalm 34:10

**The young lions lack and suffer hunger;
But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.**

Psalm 23:1,5 (NKJV)

**1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.**

John 4:14

"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

We see this **satisfaction** that God **promises**. There is no **maybe** here. If we hunger for righteousness, if what we want is Christ, we will have Him. Now how do we make this happen? What is it that we must do? What steps can we take to become this kind of person?

I think the first step is to call out to God and confess how far we are from being this kind of person. We should confess our **unrighteousness**. We do well just to be brutally honest with God. I want to hunger and thirst for you

and your righteousness. I want to be rid of sin. But I want other things too. Please forgive me. Please help me. I want to want to hunger and thirst for you and your righteousness more than anything else in my life. Please change me. Please make me more like you. Do anything Lord, but do not allow me to live a life that dishonors you. Break me and remake me. Do what you must, but help me to hunger for you.

And then we are given a commandment by Jesus.

Matthew 6:31-33 (NKJV)

³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Look at this. Isn't food and drink and clothing the things that will make us happy? Isn't it the world's stuff that we so often seek. Jesus is saying, choose differently. This hunger needs to happen to us. But part of the process is determining to choose the Kingdom stuff and righteousness over the things that tempt us pursue.

seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness

That is a command. That is not something Jesus says will just happen to us as we go through a day. This is something we choose with our wills to pursue. We cannot make ourselves hungry for the right food, but we can focus our attentions upon it. And, as we do, God will do the rest.

And what is the result? He gives us all the secondary stuff we are tempted to pursue. We seek His Kingdom and get what we need. We hunger and thirst for righteousness and we get happiness. Ultimately, we receive **happiness**, by pursuing **holiness**.

What is it that we are practically pursuing. We do well to pray to God and ask Him to reveal that to us as we examine our lives this week.