

They that hunger and thirst

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[0 : 00] The fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew chapter 5 and today we're looking at verse 6.

Matthew 5 and at verse 6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.

We live in a world which is full of hunger and full of thirst.

That's exemplified for us week by week on our television screens as we see places of this earth that are drought ridden.

People in the world either because of famine or drought who are hungry and thirsty. And others in the world who are hungry and thirsty because of war and strife either civil or between nations.

[1 : 33] And yet I think that in common with the other beatitudes, this beatitude is dealing with spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst.

And you know the world in which we live is full of such spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst. In fact, I would go so far as to say that there are people in the world today who wouldn't care a whit about the Gospel of Christ.

Who aren't found in a church. Who aren't near the house of God on the Lord's day. And yet if you were to ask what characterizes these people, you could say that what characterizes them is that they are spiritually hungry and spiritually thirsty.

And you find them turning to this pleasure and that pleasure and the next pleasure. And there's a constant striving in the lives of these people to quench the thirst and to assuage the hunger that is in their spirit.

What do we have to say to these people who are hungry and thirsty but who are going to the wrong place to meet that hunger and to meet that thirst?

[3 : 06] We're going to look at this beatitude and we're going to tell them what's really wrong in their lives. You see what's happened in the lives of these people is this.

They're spiritually hungry and they're spiritually thirsty. And instead of seeking for righteousness, instead of hungering and thirsting for righteousness, they're hungering and thirsting for happiness.

That's what the world is doing. Righteousness has been replaced in their thinking by happiness. And they think if only we could be happy.

And they're on this treadmill constantly in a rough race going on and on. And they're looking for happiness. And happiness that they look for is a very, very difficult thing to find for them because they've missed the key to happiness.

You see, the key to happiness is righteousness. And the Bible makes that very poor from Genesis right through to Revelation.

[4 : 19] Now friends, it's so important that we should know what this righteousness is. That's our first excursion in this text today.

We're going to ask, what is the righteousness for which these blessed, happy people are hungering and thirsting? What is this righteousness?

And then secondly, we're going to take another excursion. And we're going to ask, what is their hunger and thirst? And then thirdly, we're going to look at this.

What is their, what is promised to them here? What is the fulfillment of their hunger and thirst? These three thoughts then.

What is righteousness? What is hunger and thirst? And what is the promise in this text? Now, it seems to me that the Bible presents us with three different kinds of righteousness.

[5 : 31] And let me just name them briefly for you here today. The first righteousness that the Bible speaks of, I think, is national righteousness.

The Bible is plain that there is such a thing as national righteousness. You remember the way it's put in the book of Proverbs. Righteousness alone exalts a nation.

But sin is a reproach to any people. And it's obvious that there have been epochs in the history of our land when that righteousness, that is a national righteousness, it exhausted our nation.

And God, in his care and in his blessing, rested in a mighty way on this nation in times when he granted national righteousness.

But that's not the righteousness of this text. And the other two righteousnesses that the Bible mentions, I would say that it's an amalgam of these two that is mentioned for us in this text.

[6 : 41] And let me name them just like this. The Bible speaks, secondly, I believe, of unimputed righteousness. Unimputed righteousness.

Now, what is this imputed righteousness? Well, let me spell it out this way for you. It is the righteousness by which men are justified in the sight of God.

You remember the way the Shorter Catechism talks about this righteousness, this justification. It's an act of God's free grace wherein he pardons all our sins.

That's the first part of justification. He pardons our sins. He accepts us. That's the second stage. He accepts us as righteous in his sight.

Only for the righteousness of Christ. Imputed to us. And received by faith alone. So you have in the Bible an imputed righteousness.

[7 : 53] But you also have in the Bible what we might call an imparted righteousness. And what is the difference between an imputed righteousness and an imparted righteousness?

Well, the difference between these two is this. The imputed righteousness is the righteousness which is counted for us.

Which is reckoned to us by God in Christ. And the imparted righteousness is the righteousness by which sinners are sanctified and made a holy people in the presence of God.

And today I think when we speak about this righteousness. For which men who are blessed are fasting and are hungry. We've got to say that it's an amalgam and amalgam of this justifying righteousness.

And particularly that righteousness of life by which sinners are sanctified. My friends, on this last Sabbath day of 1991, we've presented with a righteousness which we must hunger and thirst after if we would really be blessed.

[9 : 16] And now let's look at some of the things that we can say about this righteousness. And first of all, I think we should look at it as the Bible so often looks at the concepts that it presents to us.

It looks at it negatively and then positively. How often I've had to say that in the last few months as we've been expounded in the Scriptures. You've got it expounded for us, presented to us negatively.

And then it's presented to us positively. Now how can we present this righteousness negatively? Well, let me say this.

This righteousness is, first of all, freedom from a broken relationship. It's freedom from a broken relationship.

Because, you know, that's the way things were with man who sinned against God. And we read it all so clearly in Hosea 2 today. Man's relationship with God and sin is described for us in terms of a broken marriage.

[10 : 30] And you know, there's nothing new under the sun. Living in these days in which we live, when so much of family life is breaking down. There's nothing new under the sun.

And God in the Old Testament described the relationship that men have and have broken with themselves in terms of a broken marriage.

You know, my friends, that's the way everyone here is an unconverted soul is. That's the way every unconverted man is. You have the specter, my friend, of a broken relationship in your life.

There's a marriage covenant. Because God created you in his image and he made you for himself. But the marriage covenant has been broken. And your relationship with God is broken in shatters at your feet.

Do you remember the illustration that the great Puritan John Howe made of man's relationship with God? He said man is made in the image of God.

[11 : 38] But the image is like a ruined castle. And that ruined castle is lying in ruins. And somehow or other it has vestiges of the glory that once it had.

But the pain of the whole situation is heightened. After you come up to the castle door, you've got written over the door, God wants to dwell to you.

And that's the way it is, my friend, with those who have a broken relationship. But this righteousness heals that relationship.

It brings men who are separated and broken back to God. And then secondly, it is freedom from sin's power.

Do you remember the way Charles Wesley spoke about this whole righteousness? He says about Christ, He breaks the power of scanted sin.

[12 : 39] He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood availed for me.

My friend, do you know the power of sin in your own life? Do you know that sin has had such a power over you that it has brought you away from God?

And it's brought about a broken relationship in your life? Yes, you do. And you also know the power of that sin in your life.

It's keeping you down. It's keeping you away. It's breaking your fellowship with God so often. It's keeping you worldly. Filling you with worthiness.

But my friends, there's a righteousness that can free men from the power of sin. And at last it's going to do it fully.

[13 : 37] And then also he breaks the desire of sin. The desire of sin. A.W. Pink somewhere talks about salvation in four, under four heads.

He says that God's salvation, God's righteousness is first of all a salvation from the pleasure of sin. Secondly, it's a salvation from the penalty of sin.

Thirdly, it's a salvation from the power of sin. And at last, it's a salvation from the presence of sin. Oh, my friends, what a righteousness this is.

If salvation can be summed up in terms of imputed and imparted righteousness, then what a salvation this really is.

Oh, yes it is. Because it's freedom from the desire to sin. Has God broken that desire in your own life, my friend?

[14 : 47] Has God dealt with you so that your whole life has been changed from what once it was? Once upon a time, you had no desire but to go on in the ways of this world.

To go on with your sin. To go on with your carnal life and your carnal living. But God changed all that. He brought about a new relationship with himself.

And now, your desire is to please him and to live for him and to glorify him in the earth. Is that true? And at last, I think we can sum it up like this.

That righteousness is the freedom from self in all the horrible manifestations and in all its forms.

Oh, my friend, what do you hate most in this church today? Do you hate self? Do you hate the old self that crucified Christ?

[15 : 56] Do you hate the old man in your life that is always wanting to keep you down and to leave you carnal? Is that what you hate most today?

The old principle of life that was always keeping you down and dragging you into the mud. Is that what you hate today?

Well, I believe that if you're a Christian and if God has given you a taste of this righteousness of which we've been speaking this morning, God has brought you to a place where you've come to hate yourself and all that you stand for because he's shown you that all that's in your heart is sin.

But then, we want to look at this righteousness positively. And I think we can look at this righteousness positively in this way. First of all, righteousness means, in the life of a man, a longing after holiness.

A longing after holiness of life. No, my friend, that's not something that grows on the natural tree.

[17 : 12] That's not something that grows on man by nature. A longing after holiness. We don't want holiness. Do you know, if you were to go out in the world tonight, today and tonight, you'd find men looking for pleasure and looking for happiness.

But one thing that they would say to you about it, about the happiness that they look for is this, it's not to be found in holiness because holiness only produces a long face.

Young people here today, young unconverted people here today, isn't that the way you think? Holiness only brings about a long face. A face as long as tomorrow.

That's what Christianity does. That's the way you think about it. But is that true? Do you know, my friend, that real fulfillment in life is to be found in holy living, in our life that is lived in the service of this blessed master.

That's the way people should be looking for righteousness and thirsting after righteousness, wanting holiness. But what do you say? You say what my chain said, make me up holy.

[18 : 33] as a pardoned sinner can be. That's the man that's thirsting for righteousness. He's wanting holiness. Now what kind of holiness is this man wanting?

Is it the kind of holiness that looks good in the presence of his fellow men? Well, yes it is. It is. He wants to look on the outside what he is on the inside.

But the difference between a pharisaical holiness and a Christian holiness is this, that the righteousness that is on the outside of a man's life is also the righteousness that he wants inside his life.

Let me sum up what this righteousness really is. It is single heartedness, single mindedness before God.

No double standards. No double vision here. It's single purpose. And the single purpose of a holy life is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

[19 : 43] That's what Christians want. That's what the righteous man wants. He wants his life to be one seamless robe, one seamless garment before God.

He wants holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Do you want that today? Well, if you do, my friend, I would guarantee you that the holiness that you seek after is something that once you didn't seek after at all.

You didn't want it in the past, but you want it desperately now. And then secondly, it seems to me that this holiness entails another longing.

a longing after God himself. A.W. Tozer has perhaps the gem of all the gems that he wrote.

It's a little book to which he gave the title The Pursuit of God. The Pursuit of God. Do you know, my friends, that's the life of the righteous man.

[20 : 50] The righteous man, his life is the pursuit of God. The unconverted man, you know, what his life is until he's converted. The man who God is going to reach in his grace and in his mercy, you know what his life is?

It's God's pursuit of him. And I want to ask you this morning, is God pursuing you? Is he putting you into a corner and as he's saying to you, believe on me.

And in the moment that you come to believe on him, things change. In the God that's pursuing you who has been running away from him, you will become the pursuer.

You'll become the one that's running after God. All that of change comes into the life of the Christian when he begins to hunger and thirst after this righteousness.

He comes into the pursuit of God. Like as the heart, we were singing it this morning, like as the heart for water brooks in thirst, death, pant and praise.

[21 : 57] So, pant my longing soul, O God, that come to thee. I make, is that the story of your life now? Is that the way your life is going panting after God, wanting God desperately?

Above all us, Lord, O God, I'll early seek my soul to thirst for thee. That's the righteous man. He's a man who now is panting after God.

He's longing for God. And he can't get enough of God. He can't get enough of the Christ who phoned him as he phoned Paul on the Damascus road.

Do you remember what happened to Paul after that? This is what he said, that I am the one and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering be made conformable to his death.

That's the story of your life now, that I might know him and that's righteousness, that we might know thee the only through God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

[23 : 06] That's righteousness, knowing God. A.W. Tozer has another book and you know what he titles that? The other book. One was called The Pursuit of God and the other one was called The Knowledge of the Holy.

And that's the Christian life. The knowledge of the Holy following on the pursuit of God. Do you know it in your own life, my friend?

Do you know the pursuit of God? Do you know the Holy One? Do you know him? God's people know him. In fact, what they desire above everything else is the purity of the man who walks after God's own law and who does not go astray.

what causes you most shame as a Christian? Surely it's with how often you fall and how often you're cast down and how often you sin and how often you're aware of the fact that the good that you would, you do not.

In fact, the Christian man is a man who has pantings after God and pantings after holiness and desires after a life that he wants to live to please God.

[24 : 21] God. Now let's turn to ask the second question of our text today. What is this hunger and thirst? What does it mean?

Well, I think first of all we've got to say that hunger and thirst are the exact opposite of self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

There are people in the world, you know, and they pride themselves in this. We're self-reliant, we're self-sufficient. You know the book by Samuel Smiles that was written in the 19th century called Self-Help.

And there was a whole cult began with that book and it's gone on right into the 20th century and it's been there long before Smiles and it's because of self-sufficiency.

Self-sufficiency. There are people in the world and that's the way they live. They're self-sufficient. They don't need the help of God. They don't need to come with hunger and thirst to God.

[25 : 29] My 10 days hunger and thirst is the very opposite of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Do you know this? The education system of our day, the whole outlook of life in the end of the 20th century, it's building men.

That's what it's setting out to do, to build men and women who will be self-sufficient. It's not set out to train men in boldness. If you think that the education system of our country is what once it was, you're sadly misguided, my friend.

The education system of this land of Scotland at one time it was based on this, that it would train men to be holy, train men to be godly men.

That's not what it does now. It trains men to be self-sufficient. That's what it's doing. What's the sad dilemma that evolution has left our land with?

That it's training men to be self-sufficient. And in the end of the day according to the evolutionary thinking, what does it bring? What does it bring about?

[26 : 46] It brings about what the evolutionists call the survival of the fittest and all the rest can go to the wall. Why do you have abortion? Why do you have euthanasia? Preached today by men of respectability.

Why do you have these things? because our nation is in a title phase. They believe only in the survival of the fittest.

Oh, my friends, how we need to return to God because this self-sufficiency and this self-reliance that has been inbred in generation after generation of sinners in our land is only leading us to a warped society and a warped warped minds and lives that are totally disillusioned.

Hunger and thirst it means reliance and our sufficiency in God. Well, what does it mean? It means, I think, that these people who are hungry and thirsty are conscious of a great need in their life.

that's the first thing. They're conscious of a great need and they're conscious of a great need that can only be met by God in Christ.

[28 : 10] Remember the way Paul the Apostle was speaking to the Corinthians and spoke about this. He said, He who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

my friend, where do you go at the point of your deepest need this morning? Where do you go? Where do you go with your need?

I ask you, do you go to yourself and do you say, how am I going to work this out for myself? Or do you turn to God and do you say, Lord, be merciful to me as an heir.

that's where the man that's hungering and thirsting goes. He goes to God. And you know this hunger and thirst, it's not just a passing notion.

There are people who think, you know, that Christianity is just a passing notion. There was a little poem that used to be spoken often and sometimes sung through religions more than notion.

[29 : 18] Have you read this famous book about the Christians of Shropshire called More Than Notion? Real Christianity coming into a community, coming into lives and hearts of men in the 19th century.

And they call this book More Than Notion. And yet, you know, there are foolish people and they're prepared to believe that Christianity is just a passing whim.

I want to tell you, my friend, that when a man gets this hunger and this thirst, it leads to a pain in his soul that he can't say is a passing notion or a passing whim.

There's a pain there. There's a hunger and a thirst there. What's it like? It's like the hunger and the thirst of love.

That's what it's like. Do you know when a person falls in love, that person can't be satisfied until he or she is with his lover.

[30 : 33] And that's the way this hunger and thirst is. it's the hunger and thirst of love. And you want fellowship. And you want companionship.

And you want God. And no substitute will do. Oh, thank God, no substitute will do. All the substitutes have been blotted out and you want themselves.

And what does he promise? blessed is he that hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness. For they shall be filled. Are you thankful tonight that today that this text doesn't say blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.

for they have been filled. You know there are some people and that's the way they think of Christianity. They believe in conversion.

[31 : 42] They believe in conversion. But you know somehow or other the wheels of God's clock stopped turning at the moment of conversion. And their Christianity is blessed are they because they have been filled.

and there's no more going on in the life of grace for them. Oh what a poor substitute for Christianity is the Christianity that's content to say they have been filled.

In fact let me tell you that it's no Christianity at all the Christianity that says they have been filled and there's no ongoing thirst and no ongoing hunger and no ongoing desire.

It's not Christianity at all. At least it's not the Christianity of the Bible. Because the Christianity of the Bible means a living relationship with a living God from day to day going on pressing on to know the Lord.

What's the hole sinking behind God's reviving grace in the life of the church? Listen to what Hosea says in the sixth chapter.

[33 : 02] Come let us return to the Lord he says for he has smitten and he has torn and he will heal and then he says in three days will he revive it.

Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord. That's what this is all about. That's what this blessedness is all about.

It's the blessedness of the man who's following on to know the Lord. And how does the Lord teach this man? Do you know the Christian in everything is a paradox?

And do you know how the Lord kills this man and satisfies this man and meets this man in his own promise? He fills him by making him more hungry.

The more you get filled with this my friend, the more hungry you become. In fact, someone went so far as to say he feeds his people by making them hungry.

[34 : 11] He feeds his people by making them hungry. So if you find in your life that he is feeding you by keeping the edge of hunger on your life.

You come to church on a Lord's day morning and you sing Lord do something for my soul. You might get a crumb from the master's table and you go home.

What does it cause and what does it produce in your life? Lord I want to get back there to get more. You go to your Bible in the secret place and you say Lord speak to me and the Lord speaks to you in accents of tenderness he comes with a still small voice and he speaks to you and where does he leave you he says Lord speak to me again oh don't leave me speak to me again I want more of this I want more of you I want more of God is that true?

that true? That's the life of the Christian filled in order that you get more do you know this I think there was one man who knew something of this I'm going to tell you who it was it was a man called William Williams of Panty Kellen in Wales one of the great men of the evangelical movement of the 18th century there in Wales and he was noted particularly as the hymn writer of that movement and William Williams wrote something along these lines feed me till I want no more and you know my friend that's what this Christian who's hungering and thirsting after righteousness is doing he's wanting fed till he wants no more and when is that when will the day dawn when you want no more will it ever dawn it will dawn my friend when you'll be so full that you say ask for me

I shall be satisfied when I awaken in thy likeness that's when when you awaken in his likeness and then at that moment the lamb will come and the lamb will lead them to living fountains of water and he will wipe away all the tears from their eyes tell me Christian tell me where have your tears come from in this world it comes from the desperate hunger and the desperate thirst that you've had for more of God you can't get enough of them you can't get enough of them but there's a day coming when the lamb will lead you to the living fountains of water and you wipe away all the tears all the tears from their eyes oh unconverted soul

[37 : 39] I feel sorry for you you're not in this promise you're not in this promise at all why not because you don't hunger and you don't thirst after this righteousness blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled what a prospect what a prospect at the end of this year that we look forward to a day when we'll be so full so full that our cup will be full of running over do you know my friend in Christ I think there have been moments there have been times when he filled you so full that you could say even in the valley my cup is full and running over there have been moments in your life when your cup was so full he anointed your head with oil and he gave you a table in the wilderness and your cup was full and running over and how did it over flow well

I think the only way in which our cup can overflow two ways first of all it should always overflow in praise to himself and secondly it should overflow in witness to our fellow sinners on the earth let it be full and overflowing in praise to your Lord and in witness to your fellow sinners let's pray together oh Lord may we know that hunger and thirst after righteousness when we live in a world that is running after happiness but finding none oh God may we see that the secret of happiness is in true righteousness bless us we pray thee on this last sabbath morning of this year how much has been folded within the folds of this year for every one of us so many many moments in providence that we can't we can't rationalize the very fact that we stand here today we can't rationalize it we don't know how it is but yet it was in the folds of

God's providence and before it was in the folds of thy providence thank God it was in the fold of thy decree oh blessed Lord we thank thee that it was in the fold of thy decree and we pray now that we might cast ourselves on thy care for all that lies ahead and the glory shall be thine amen