

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Happy Are the Hungry**

Scripture: Matthew 5:6

Code: 2201

Take your Bible, will you? And look with me at Matthew chapter 5 and verse 6. Matthew chapter 5, verse 6. As you know, we've been studying the Beatitudes, been studying the Sermon on the Mount. Let me read verses 1 to 6 to set the pace for what comes in verse 6. "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain and when He was seated, His disciples came unto Him and He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.'" Let's pray together as we begin our study tonight.

Father, we thank You for this tremendous truth that we're going to be looking at tonight, and Father, we would desire above all things that the Holy Spirit would teach us. Lord, help us to really get a grip on what this is saying. Help us to dig deeply into the mine of Your truth and deeply into our own lives to search out to see if we respond in the way we ought to. Minister to us, Lord, as we consider the words of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

In studying this Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 5 through 7, we are studying the teaching of Jesus Christ, the first great sermon our Lord gives in the New Testament. Now, you'll remember that the overall theme of Matthew is to present Christ as king. I only want to remind you of that. Matthew is presenting Christ as king. And so repeatedly through the first part of Matthew as through all the remainder, he emphasizes some element of the kingliness of Christ. Whether it's a kingly line in His genealogy, whether it's the worship of the Magi who are the official king makers, whether it's the fulfilling of the kingly prophecies of the Old Testament, whether it's the dominion that He has over Satan which shows Himself to be a greater ruler than even Satan, whatever it is, Matthew's perspective is to present Christ as king.

Now, when he comes to chapter 5, he presents the words of the king or the manifesto of the kingdom, the truths about this king's kingdom. If indeed He is a king, of what nature is His kingdom? Well, he describes His kingdom in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. And we note that it is a spiritual kingdom and its characteristics are spiritual characteristics. So this is a spiritual description of the kingdom of the king. It is just another way to present the fact that Jesus is indeed the king.

And if you note at the very end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7, verse 28, it says, "It came to pass, when He had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine." Why? "For

He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” Not only were His words the words of a king, but His way was the way of a king. His manner was the manner of a king. The way He spoke was that of a king. It was authoritative. He didn’t need to quote anybody. He didn’t need to say, “Well, I want you to know this is true because so-and-so says it’s true.” The rabbis and the scribes always taught by quoting somebody who was famous. Jesus simply said it. It was not only the word of a king but it was the way of a king in its authoritativeness.

Now, as we look at the Sermon on the Mount, we find that it is a masterful presentation of the conditions for entering His kingdom and the characteristics of those who are in His kingdom. It is a manifesto of the kingdom. It is the teaching of living in the kingdom of the king. Now, it begins with the introduction here in the first 12 verses, and Jesus introduces this sermon by telling us that it’s happiness that He’s after, it’s blessedness that He is offering. It’s really the— you know, any good preacher knows that in the very beginning, you’ve got to get your people to start listening. You’ve got to say something that hooks them. And Jesus knows that the world is looking for happiness, that people want to know blessedness, they want to know blissfulness, they want to be happy and have meaning in life and be joyful. And so He starts out by saying, “I’m offering you happiness.”

But His presentation is not exactly what they expected. He was offering them happiness in a way they had never heard in their lives and consequently it fascinated them. And by the time He was done, they were more than fascinated. They were absolutely astonished at what He had said. And so our Lord is offering real happiness, real blessedness, but it is the kind of blessedness that only comes by being a part of His kingdom. These are the truths of His kingdom. And so, as I said, they express both a necessary condition for entering the kingdom as well as a characteristic of those who dwell in the kingdom. People say, “Are the truths here in the Beatitudes how you get in the kingdom or how you live in the kingdom?” The answer is yes.

They are all about how you are when you come into the kingdom and how you will be as you live in the kingdom. In other words, to enter the kingdom, you must be poor in spirit. And as you live in the kingdom you continue recognize your spiritual poverty. In order to enter the kingdom, you must mourn over your sin. And as you continue living in the kingdom as a son of God, you will mourn over your sin. In order to enter the kingdom, you must come in meekness, not pride. A proud man can’t enter, and once you’re in the kingdom, meekness continues to be your attitude as you look at God and as God becomes more and more wonderful as you study and learn more. And in order to enter the kingdom, you must hunger and thirst after righteousness. And once you’re in the kingdom, you’ll continue to hunger and thirst for more of that same righteousness. So it is both a condition for entrance and a characteristic of living in the kingdom. This is a description of coming in and living in His kingdom.

Now let’s look at verse 6, this particular aspect. “Blessed are they who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness for they shall be filled.” Now, this Beatitude speaks of a very strong desire. It

speaks of a driving pursuit. It speaks of a passionate force inside of us, an ambition, if you will. And ambition is a word that can be used in a good sense. It also can be used in a bad sense. There are a lot of things that people strive for and pursue and have a passion for and have ambition to see fulfilled, and there are a lot of strong desires that are perverted, that go in the wrong way.

For example: I think of Lucifer. Lucifer was God's most glorious creation. The most wonderful thing that God ever made. And Lucifer had a consuming, resolute ambition. He had a passion that was really a driving force within his mind. What was it? In Isaiah 14:13, it tells us what the passion of Lucifer was. "I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also on the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High." His ambition was to be like God. He was hungry, but he was— mark it— power hungry. He was power hungry. He had a resolute ambition and a consuming passion but it was for power. He was power hungry. And in the response of God, we see God says, "You shall be brought down to sheol, to the sides of the pit. You'll not realize your ambition."

And then there was Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar, who was the king of Babylon, the greatest of all the world empires. Nebuchadnezzar, who was a monarch like none after him. Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled a great dominion of men. Nebuchadnezzar, the most glorious king of history. And Nebuchadnezzar had a strong desire. In Daniel chapter 4, it tells us of his desire in verse 30. "The king spoke and said, 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power?'" If Lucifer was power hungry, then Nebuchadnezzar was praise hungry. So praise hungry was he that he praised himself and God reacted. "Oh, Nebuchadnezzar. Thy kingdom is departed from thee and they'll drive thee from men and they dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make thee to eat grass like oxen and seven times pass over thee until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." Lucifer was power hungry and Nebuchadnezzar was praise hungry. And neither of them ever saw the fulfillment of their ambition.

There's another individual I would draw to your attention who had ambition. There are many, but I'm just giving you an illustration. In Luke chapter 12, in verse 17, we meet the rich fool. "The rich fool said within himself, 'What shall I do, because I have no place to bestow my crops?' And he said, 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns and I will build greater barns and there will I bestow all my crops and all my goods.'" He wasn't about to share them with anybody; he was just going to pile them up. "And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many, many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.'" He had ambition. He was possession hungry. Possession hungry. And you know what God said to him? "You fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be which you have provided?"

Oh, there have been plenty of people with ambition. Power hungry, praise hungry, possession hungry. We could even say of this man, he was pleasure hungry. "Eat, drink, and be merry." But they were all fools. They were hungry for the wrong thing. Nothing wrong with ambition. Nothing wrong

with passion. Nothing wrong with a resolute drive. Nothing wrong with a great desire if it's for the right thing. You say, "What's the right thing?" Go back to verse 6, that's the right thing. "Happy are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Now, this is a strong statement. Food and water are necessities, beloved. You remember that? That's right. They're necessities. So is righteousness. That's the first indication of this Beatitude. You need righteousness like you need food and water. It isn't wrong to hunger. It isn't wrong to thirst. It is the most normal thing. It is the most common drive. It is the most necessary drive, and so it is with righteousness.

Our physical life depends on food and water. Our spiritual life depends on righteousness. You can't live physically without food and water, and you'll never live spiritually without righteousness. Think of the physical aspect and maybe it'll give you an idea of the intensity that the words of Jesus have here. Ever since Joseph met his brothers in Egypt in Genesis, the world has been cursed with famine and probably even before that. Famine came to Rome in 436 B.C. and it caused thousands of people to literally throw themselves into the Tiber River and drown themselves rather than die of starvation. Famine struck England in 1005 and all Europe suffered famine in the years 879, 1016, and 1162. And even in the 19th century, the last century, with some advances made in technology and commerce, hunger stalked Russia, China, India, and Ireland so that masses of humanity died. And today it goes on. Today in parts of Africa and parts of India, thousands die of malnutrition and the accompanying diseases. Hundreds more perish in parts of Latin America. Hunger is like war. It's like pestilence. It just kills. It just consumes.

And so food and water are so necessary, but all the horrors that are imaginable of physical hunger pale when compared to the horror of spiritual hunger that is unfulfilled, spiritual thirst that is unquenched. Physical elements are only a small token of a deeper, more serious hunger that faces mankind and that is a spiritual hunger. And Jesus is here saying that the real thing that a man needs is righteousness. And "anybody coming into my kingdom and anybody living in my kingdom has as great an appetite and thirst for that as a man does for food and water."

Unsaved people do have ambition. They have hunger and they have thirst, physically. And I guess they have thirst for happiness and hunger for fulfillment, but they seem to find it in the wrong place. In fact, Peter compares the unsaved to a dog that goes back and licks up its vomit. Peter compares the unsaved to a pig that goes back and wallows in its own mire. You see, the world is trying to feed on what is not nourishing. The world is trying to feed on that which cannot fulfill its need. The heart of every person in the world, believer or unbeliever, the heart of every man ever made was created for a— with a hunger for God. But man tries to satisfy the hunger for God with all the false things, with the garbage, the husks of the hogs, like the prodigal son. There he is. His heart hungers to be fed and he feeds on the hogs' food. The dog goes back and licks its vomit. They don't seek the bread of life; they seek what the Scripture says: that which is not bread.

Jesus offered Himself as that bread. He knew people were hungry. He offered Himself as that water. He knew they were thirsty. Jeremiah said it vividly. This is Jeremiah 2:13, listen to what it says, “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewed them out cisterns”— what kind?— “broken cisterns that can hold no water.” In other words, God has made man with a thirst and a hunger for Him, but man refuses the well of living water and makes himself broken cisterns that can't even hold water. It's so sad to see people hunger and thirst for the wrong things, hunger and thirst for happiness and meaning and fulfillment and inevitably try to fill themselves up with self-indulgent pleasures, possessions, power, and praise.

The prodigal son, he longed for the pleasure. He longed to possess, he longed for the popularity of a riotous life, but he went hungry in his soul and finally he had the sense to come to himself and say, “How many of my father's servants have bread enough and to spare? Why am I doing this?” And he went back to his father's house and he was given a feast, and that feast is a picture of a spiritual feast. The world in its riotous living tries to fill itself with the husks of the swine. Tries to fill itself with the pleasures of sin, and it comes up absolutely empty, and those who respond to the Spirit of God come running back to the Father and there is a feast to fill up the empty heart, to fill up the hungry soul, the thirsty soul.

First John chapter 2 warns that you can't get satisfied in the world. “Love not the world neither the things that are in the world.” What's in the world? The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and none of that stuff abides forever. It's just wind. So right at the start, ask yourself this as we begin our study: What are you hungry for? Power, praise, possessions, pleasure? Are you feeding yourself on the husks of the swine? Are you like the dog who licks his own vomit? The pig that wallows in his own mire? Or are you looking to the only real source? Because the answer you give to that question will determine whether you're in the kingdom or not. What do you hunger for? The blessed hunger and thirst after righteousness. Those in His kingdom hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Now, let's ask some key questions as we have for each of the Beatitudes. Question number one: How does this Beatitude fit in with the others? How does it fit in with the others? Well, notice, first of all, in verse 3, it says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” We talked about the fact that that means morally bankrupt. That is the recognition that you are destitute of any righteous thing. That is the recognition that before God you stand absolutely stripped naked and empty. That is the recognition when you've added up all the plusses of your life, they are zero. That is the recognition that you cannot help yourself. You are hopeless. You are sinful.

And that is followed by the next one, “Blessed are they that mourn.” And that is the response to that recognition. When you see yourself and you're broken in your spirit, you will mourn. Here is the sorrow that comes over the moral bankruptcy. And then there is meekness. And meekness says, “Look at me in comparison to God. I am nothing.” And meekness is humility and when you see your

sin and you are broken and you mourn, you will take a place of meekness before God. And in your meekness before God, you realize that the only hope you have of ever knowing righteousness is to seek it at His hand, and so you come to the fourth Beatitude and you hunger and thirst after what you know is not yours on your own.

So the progression is simple. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes: "This Beatitude follows logically from the previous ones. It is a statement to which all the others lead. It is the logical conclusion to which they come. It is something for which we should all be profoundly thankful and grateful to God. I do not know of a better test that anyone can apply to himself or herself in this whole matter of the Christian profession than a verse like this. If this verse is to you one of the most blessed statements of the whole of Scripture, you can be quite certain you're a Christian. If it is not, you had better examine your foundations again."

Because if you have been broken in your spirit and are overwhelmed with your sinfulness and you mourn over your sinfulness and then you look up to recognize the holiness of God, the response should be that you hunger and thirst for what He has that you need. And if you do not hunger and thirst after righteousness, you are not a citizen of God's kingdom. Our society chases all the wrong things, you see. They chase money, materialism, fame, popularity, pleasure, usually all because of greed, not need, but it's all the wrong stuff. And you know the sad part of it is, even though the United States grants us the pursuit of happiness, people don't find it because they define happiness in a wrong way. Happiness is money. Happiness is pleasure. Happiness is having material things. Here it says happiness is brokenness, happiness is mourning, happiness is meekness, happiness is hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

But you'll notice the response to each of those. Look back at verse 3 again. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They shall be comforted. They shall inherit the earth. They shall be filled. Isn't that fabulous? If you sum that all up, you know what you get? You get everything there is. You're filled, you inherit the earth, you're comforted, and you inherit the kingdom of heaven. That's fabulous. In other words, on God's condition, everything is going to be yours. And here's the point: The world is working like mad to gain material things, to gain money, to gain all of this stuff, when if they came into God's kingdom on His terms, they'd get it all in the end anyway. Right? That's the whole point.

You people are breaking your neck to get what God wants to give. See? And going at it the way you're trying to go to get it, you'll never get it; coming on God's conditions where you don't try to get it, you'll get it. In other words, it's available as a gift, you just can't earn it. So Jesus is saying, "Why are you working so hard to get all of this?" The Jews, man, they were working to bring the kingdom. They were trying their best to be comforted in a very difficult situation. And they wanted to inherit the earth so bad, they could taste it. And they were trying to fill up their life with meaning. And they were chasing all in the wrong way and the Lord simply says to them, "I'll give you everything you want. I'll give you the kingdom. I'll give you present comfort. I'll fill your life with everything it needs to satisfy.

I'll give you the whole earth. You can have the whole deal if you'll just come on my conditions: brokenness, mournfulness, meekness, hungering, thirsting for righteousness." And I guess maybe the key to the whole thing is this meekness thought because the meek person is the person who's broken over sin and seeks God's gift. There's no pride. He just seeks God's gift.

In every example of meekness— listen to this. In every example of meekness in the Bible, the underlying motive was always that the individual knew God's promise. I'll say it again. In every example of meekness in the Bible, the underlying motive was always that the individual knew God's promise. For example, take Abraham. Last week, I told you— two weeks ago, I told you that Abraham was meek, because when Lot and he were going to decide who gets the land, right? He said, "Lot, you take whatever you want." He was meek. But you know what he knew in his mind? God had promised him the whole thing anyway. He didn't care if Lot had a little of it temporarily. You see, meekness can always take its place because it knows in the end everything belongs to it. Remember David? David wouldn't raise his sword against Saul. Remember I told you he could have killed Saul, but instead he just cut off his robe— why? Because David knew he was the king and he was going to get it all anyway, why did he have to worry?

In other words, the basis is God's promise and once we believe God's promise, we don't have to try so hard to get all this stuff. I read my Bible this way, God says, "MacArthur, you're my child, you'll inherit the earth," so why should I spend all my time on my own right now trying to get it? Doesn't make any sense. Going to be mine anyway. I don't mind some other people borrowing it for a while. It's all coming back to me, based on His promise. You see, this is the underlying thing, people, you have to realize. This is the whole basis of motivation in the Sermon on the Mount. You enter God's kingdom and you know it's all yours anyway, see. Only can it become yours at His hand. And later on this becomes the motivation for other things. If you look at verse 40 of Matthew 5: "If a man sues you at the law and takes away your coat, let him have your cloak also." Why? You're going to have all you need in the kingdom. What do you care? "And whosoever wants you to go a mile, go two. Give to him that asks thee and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away."

Listen, don't hang onto the stuff of the world. Don't try to be possessive. Don't try to grab it all; it'll all be yours anyway, so share it. Now, you see, with that kind of a heart, with that kind of a spirit, you can have the right ambition. If you're saying, "Look, all I want, God, is Your righteousness, all I want is to be meek before You, all I want is to have Your kingdom on Your terms," you know His promise in the end is that you'll inherit everything. Everything.

In fact, the apostle Paul even said to the Corinthians, "All things are yours,"— didn't he?— "and you're Christ's and Christ is God's." It's all yours anyway. It's all yours. And so here were these Jews and, boy, they were trying to get the kingdom, they were trying to take the earth. They were trying to be comforted in a discomfoting situation. They were trying to fill their lives and they were working like mad to do it and the Lord said, "If you just come on my terms, I'll give you the whole thing." He said it

this way in chapter 6 also, verse 33, listen to this one. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His”– what?– “righteousness and”– what?– “all these things shall be”– what?– “added unto you.” You see, it’s all yours anyway, on God’s terms. So we say, “Happy are the hungry.”

There’s pain in verse 3, broken in spirit. There’s pain in verse 4, mourning. There’s pain in verse 5, meekness, the death of self. That’s suicide, it’s painful. But there’s the comfort of verse 6. Hungering and thirsting, that’s the solution. You get to the place where you start to reach out to God. It’s kind of negative at the beginning. You just hurt a lot. You see your sin and then you begin to move toward God. You begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness. So that’s why this Beatitude fits here because it makes sense. You take a man broken over sin, you take a woman broken over sin, meek before a holy God knowing he has nothing he can do in himself to gain or inherit anything, who then reaches out in a hunger and a thirst for that which only God can give. See?

Let’s take a second question: What does it mean to hunger and thirst? We’ve already hinted at it. It has to do with desire. And by the way, a great and intense desire. The force of Christ’s words here are just powerful, particularly in that culture, maybe not so much in our culture because we don’t know what it is to be hungry. We don’t know what it is to thirst and so we don’t understand this. When you think of thirsty, you think of– you’ve gone out and run around a little bit and you’re thirsty. You don’t know what it is to be in the midst of a drought where you’ve had no water for days. When you think of hunger, you mean it’s 1 o’clock and you’re used to eating at 12:15. You don’t know what it means to be hungry. You don’t know what it is to go without food, but the idea is desperation.

There’s an interesting book written by Major V. Gilbert entitled, *The Last Crusade*, and in a 1966 issue of *National Christian* magazine, E.M. Blaiklock reiterated the story that this Major Gilbert tells in this book, *The Last Crusade*. And the book is written about the British liberation of Palestine in World War I. If you remember, General Allenby was a part of the liberation of Palestine in World War I and Blaiklock tells the story about this major. This is what he says: “Driving up from Beersheba, a combined force of British Australians and New Zealanders were pressing on the rear of the Turkish retreat over arid desert. The attack outdistanced its water-carrying camel train.” In other words, they got so far ahead of their water, they were separated. “The water bottles were empty, the sun blazed pitilessly out of a sky where the vultures wheeled about expectantly. ‘Our heads ached,’ writes Major Gilbert, ‘our eyes became bloodshot and dim in the blinding glare. Our tongues began to swell. Our lips turned to a purplish black and began to burst.’ Those who dropped out of the column were never seen again, but the desperate force struggled on to Sheria.

“There were wells at Sheria and had they been unable to take the place by nightfall, thousands were doomed to die of thirst. ‘And so we fought that day,’ writes Major Gilbert, ‘as men fought for their lives. We entered Sheria’s station on the heels of the retreating Turks. The first objects which met our view were the great stone cisterns full of cold, clear, drinking water. And in the still night air, the sound of water running into the tanks could be distinctly heard, maddening in its nearness. Yet not a man



murmured when orders were given for the battalions to fall in, two deep, facing the cisterns.’ He describes the stern priorities, the wounded, those on guard duty, then company by company. It took four hours before the last man had his drink of water. And in all that time, they had been standing 20 feet from a low stone wall on the other side of which were thousands of gallons of water. ‘I believe,’ Major Gilbert concludes, ‘that we all learned our first real Bible lesson on the march from Beersheba to Sheria wells. If such were our thirst for God and for righteousness, for His will in our life, a consuming, all-embracing, preoccupying desire, how rich in the fruit of the spirit would we be.’”

That’s what Jesus is trying to say. He’s talking about hunger and thirst to people who understood what it meant. The Greek verbs are just very powerful. *Peinntes* means to be needy, to suffer hunger. It has the idea of a deep hunger, not just superficiality. The word *dipsa*, to suffer thirst. Again, it carries the idea of a genuine thirst. And here they are, the strongest impulses in the natural realm. And by the way, they are in a continuous present participle. The ones who are hungering. The ones who are thirsting. It is a continuous thing. And so I say to you, beloved, this is not only the one— the condition of the one coming in, but this is the condition of the one in the kingdom.

You know— I’ll put it this way: When I came to Jesus Christ, I hungered and thirsted for His righteousness, and now that I know Him, I hunger and thirst for more of it, right? That’s what He’s saying. In fact, Lenski, the great commentator, says: “This hunger and this thirst increases in the very act of being satisfied.” Luke adds a note to this. Luke has a parallel passage and he adds the word “now.” “Blessed are they who are hungering now.” It is a present, it is a continuous thing. It is a moment-by-moment way of life. When you become a Christian, you don’t stop.

Listen, look at your life. If you don’t hunger and thirst for righteousness, there’s a question whether you’re even in the kingdom. Let me give you an illustration: Moses. Moses had seen God. Moses, when he was in the wilderness for 40 years, had God call him. And he came and he saw God in a blazing, burning bush. He had seen God. He saw the Shekinah of God, as it were, blazing in the bush and God said to him, “Take your shoes off, Moses, you’re standing on holy ground.” And later on when God went back to lead Israel out of that land, he saw God. He saw God’s hand in the miracles, the plagues. He saw God when God parted the Red Sea and let them all walk through and then drowned all of the Egyptian army. He saw God as they moved guided by that great Shekinah glow of God in the heavens. He saw God. He knew what it was to hunger after God and be filled.

But you know something? In obedience to God’s command, he built a tabernacle. And when the tabernacle was completed, the glory of God came into that place because Moses said to Him, “God I want to see Your glory.” You might say, “Moses, enough is enough, guy. I mean, you have really seen a lot of stuff.” And Moses would say, “But not enough.” God took him up into the mountain and God showed him a flaming finger that scratched the law of God in the tables of stone in the side of a mountain. And when Moses came down, it wasn’t enough and he said, “Show me Your glory.” And when he came down, he was lit up. And as the glory began to diminish, he went back up the

mountain and he looked again at God's glory and then he came down. And then he went back again. It was never enough, it was never enough. "I beseech you," he says in Exodus 33:18. "I beg you, show me your glory." You see, this is the character of a son of the kingdom. You see, he never is satisfied. There is un-satisfaction in the very satisfaction itself. Always the hunger for more.

I think of David. David, the man after God's own heart, David who walked in close communion with God, David who wrote the Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." "He leadeth me beside the still waters." "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." "His rod and His staff they comfort me." He'd known God. He'd known God in his life. God had protected him. God had cared for him. God had guided Him. God had directed him. Zeal for God's house had eaten him up. The pain that fell on God, fell on him. He knew God in an intimacy. You would say, "Oh, there's a man who knows God, a man out of whom the Psalms flowed like water out of a stream." In Psalm 63 he says, "Oh God, thou art my God." But it didn't stop there. He said, "Early will I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee, my flesh longs for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is," you see.

Now, what he's saying, you see, is that the hunger and the thirst never diminishes. In a true son of the kingdom, it's a way of life. Look at the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 3. Why, you say, "Paul, you've known all there is to know. I mean, you in your lifetime had personal visions of Jesus Christ, beginning on the Damascus Road. And then when you were in jail in Jerusalem." And then, my goodness, Paul called up into the third heaven to see things too wonderful to behold. "Oh, Paul, what else can be said? Paul, you who write all the theology, you who have penned the great expressions of divine truth in the New Testament, what more could you want?" And the cry of his heart in Philippians 3:10 is: "Oh, that I may know Him"— see?— "and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings." It's never enough, it's never enough.

Sure, he knew the law, he says in verse 6. "I knew the righteousness of the law, but I counted that as refuse, dung. I just want to know God." And you hear Peter, who cries out: "Grow in grace and grow in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It's never enough, see? Mr. Darby, great man of God who was so responsible in the early days of the Plymouth Brethren movement, said this: "To be hungry is not enough. I must be really starving to know what is in God's heart toward me. When the prodigal son was hungry, he went to feed on the husks, but when he was starving, he went to his Father." Yes, that's what Jesus is talking about, the kind of desperation that only God can satisfy.

A lady came to me this morning and she said, "You know, I'm trying to share with my friend and my friend came to the Bible study, but now my friend doesn't want to come to the Bible study anymore. She wants to be religious but she just doesn't want to get committed" and I said, "She's not really hungry enough." Not until people hunger and thirst after righteousness do they seek the fulfillment that God can give. In Luke 1:53, the Bible says, "He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He sent away empty." The people who had all they needed went away empty. And so we see why this Beatitude falls into this place and we see what it means to hunger and thirst. It's a

tremendously intense thing and it knows no end. It knows no end. I believe in my life I hunger more for the righteousness of God now than I ever did. And I will believe tomorrow I'll hunger more than I did today, and until the day I see Jesus Christ, it'll be an undiminished hunger.

Third question: What is this that we hunger for? What is this righteousness? Amos said that people in the world pant after the dust of the earth. That's pretty stupid, but they do. The world just pants after the dirt of the earth. You say, "Well, what are we to hunger for?" Well, some people would say happiness. And I guess maybe that's what the world hungers for a lot. They want happiness. People are really after happiness. They just want happiness and if you could just make them happy, you're all right, boy, just— you know, the thing that always amazes me is the number of amusements we have in our society. Now, I'm not against Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm and Magic Mountain and who knows what all else and all of the games people play, but our life is so full of amusements trying to make people happy, entertainment. And you know, it's like a man with a painful disease who just wants to be relieved of his pain but doesn't then want to bother with the disease. You know, if he goes to the doctor and the doctor says, "Well, I can relieve your pain, give you a shot, a bunch of pills," he's a poor doctor. He didn't do anything to diagnose and cure the disease.

And, see, the world has a disease, but it wants to eliminate the pain with happiness, but it never wants to deal with the disease, you see, so the world is hungry and thirsty for happiness. And you want to know something else? That's even true in the church. I meet a lot of people who are Christians and what they really want is happiness. You say what do I mean by that? They're after some kind of an ecstasy. I think this is very true in the Charismatic movement. They want a holy high, I call it. They want an experience. They want a spiritual ecstasy. They want a feeling. And there are a lot of other people, they run to a seminar and they run to a conference or to a counselor to try to get some spiritual ecstasy and that isn't what they're to seek, you see. If you're just trying to find happiness.

People say, "Well, I'm so miserable in my home. I've got to find a way. How can I be happy?" No, no, that's not what you're to be after. Happiness is a byproduct. Happy are those who hunger and thirst after what? Righteousness. You want to be happy, it comes as a byproduct of righteousness. It's not any holy high you get with some zap. It's not some experience you find. That isn't what it is.

*Dikaionun*, righteousness, justification to be made right with God. And what am I saying? Listen, simple, the only real happiness in life is to be right with God. That's it. The only real happiness in life is to be right with God. And I believe this points to two things. First of all, salvation and second of all, sanctification. First of all, salvation and second, sanctification.

Let's talk about salvation for a minute. Somebody who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, first of all, seeks salvation. The righteousness that comes when you believe, the righteousness that's given to you in Christ. He sees his sin. He sees his rebellion. He sees himself separated from a holy God. He is broken. He is mournful. He is meek and he wants so much to restore himself to God. He wants

forgiveness and so he hungers and thirsts after the righteousness that comes in salvation. It is a desire to be free from self. It is a desire to be free from sin, its power, its presence, and its penalty. And this is what initiates salvation.

In many Old Testament passages, and we won't take the time tonight to go into them, but in many Old Testament passages, righteousness is synonymous with salvation. One prophet in particular makes this parallel and that is Isaiah. Isaiah repeatedly equates righteousness with salvation and that's true. If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, it's at the moment of salvation you receive it. And Isaiah makes this point, particularly in chapter 45, 46, 51, 56, and 61, toward the end of his book when he comes to the salvation element. And in those final chapters, Isaiah sees righteousness as that gift of God that comes in salvation. So what would we say then? We can put "salvation" in as a substitute word. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after salvation." You want to be happy? Hunger for salvation, hunger to be saved, hunger to have the blood of Christ cleanse your sin. Hunger to have the righteousness of Christ applied to you. Hunger to have your sin forgiven. And when a man abandons all hope of saving himself and he abandons all hope of his own self-righteousness and begins to hunger for a salvation that can only come at the hands of God, then he's going to know happiness. And this is where the Jews, you see, were hung up. They were trying to gain their own salvation by their own works.

And what Jesus says to them is literally revolutionary. "You don't have it." They were saying, "We are filled up already with righteousness," and He was saying, "Until you are flat on your back hungering and thirsting for righteousness that you can't gain, you'll never know what it is to be happy." Now let me say it in simplicity: Happiness belongs to the holy. That's what he's saying. If you're unhappy in your life, somewhere along the line, you're unholy. Jesus was talking to Jews who thought they were righteous. To them holiness was a conformity to rules, it was an external thing. But it wasn't enough. That's why Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you'll never enter the kingdom." Their righteousness doesn't cut it. The Beatitudes took the external, stripped it away and forced us to look at the inside. And when you hunger and thirst for salvation, then you'll be filled.

But there's a second element. I think it also implies sanctification. I don't think once you get saved you stop hungering and thirsting, as I said. Then you hunger and thirst for sanctification, for an increasing holiness. Beloved, I don't know how to express this as strongly as I feel it. I hope in your life there is this hunger, hunger that never stops, the desires to be more and more like Christ. This is a mark of a Christian. You keep on hungering, you keep on thirsting to desire more virtue, a greater purity, more Christlikeness. You never get to the place where you've arrived. That is the most disgusting, revolting, sickening attitude there is. Both by unregenerate people who say, "Well, we've saved ourselves" and by Christians who think they've arrived.

Sons of the kingdom never stop hungering. Paul says in Philippians 1:9, “I pray that your love may abound yet more and more.” See? You’re not done. No matter how much you love, you ought to love more. No matter how much you pray, you ought to pray more. No matter how much you obey, you ought to obey more. No matter how much you think like Christ, you ought to think like Christ more. This should be the consuming desire, never ending, “Blessed are they which do continually hunger and thirst.” The word “now,” says Luke. “You’re now in doing this.”

And I want to demonstrate a truth that I think is really rich here that shows you the totality of what you’re seeking. It isn’t that we’re just seeking bits and pieces of righteousness. We are seeking all the righteousness there is. Did you get that? We are seeking the totality of righteousness, to be like Christ. Let me show you why this is important. In the Greek language, verbs like hunger and thirst are normally followed in the genitive case expressed by the pronoun of. And this is what is called in Greek the partitive genitive. Now stay with me, this is fascinating. So that a Greek— you’ll see— so that a Greek would say— he would say “hungering” and “thirsting” and then he would add the genitive case. They have cases to show meaning. And he would translate it this: “I hunger for of food. I thirst for of water.” And the partitive genitive simply means he— it delineates that he wants part of it. For example, he would never say, “I hunger for food” because to him, that would represent all the food there was. He’s got to have a case which limits it. The partitive genitive means I hunger for of food. In other words, I don’t want all the food in the world, I just want some. He would never say, “I thirst for water.” Not all the water of the world. He would say, “I thirst for of water. I thirst for of water, a part of water, enough for my thirst.” This is normal. This is the normal expression for the Greek to use in this language.

Now, what fascinated me as I studied this is that in this passage, that normal use of the Greek is abandoned. You would have thought that it would say, “Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after of righteousness.” But it doesn’t. It drops the genitive case altogether, which is normal Greek expression, and it drops to the bottom of what we call the accusative case and it becomes a direct object unqualified. “I hunger and thirst for righteousness, all there is.” It’s a tremendous truth. And we’re never satisfied, because no matter how much righteousness we may have by God’s grace, we don’t have all there is, right? And so the hunger and the thirst goes on. And we cry out with David, “I will be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness and I will not be satisfied until I do.” And by the way, the definite article is here, they do continuously and now hunger and thirst after the righteousness. What is the righteousness? The righteousness of God.

So it begins with salvation and it continues with sanctification, and you could never be satisfied with a part of it; you can only be satisfied with all of it. With all of it. It fascinates me also. So many things in here, I can’t even— I can’t even clear my mind, you know, to keep going hardly. It fascinates me that hungering and thirsting after righteousness is commended rather than possessing righteousness. Isn’t that great? You see, the Jews would have thought He would have said, “Blessed are they who possess righteousness,” and they would have all gone, “Mm-hmm, see, that’s us. We all possess it.”

And He literally blasted them. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness.” In other words, the people who think they’ve got it aren’t blessed. The people who know they don’t, are. Isn’t that great? Just when you think you’re righteous, you’re the most desperate you’ve ever been.

No, He blesses those who hunger and those who thirst and in that very blessing is the thought that you can’t ever be fulfilled. Someone said, “This is a thirst no earthly stream can satisfy. A hunger that must feed on Christ or die.” I call it divine discontent. So we see how this Beatitude fits, what it means to hunger and thirst and the object. What is the result? Let’s look at it.

First He says, “Blessed” and last He says, “they shall be”— what?— “filled.” The word “filled” is super. We could spend a lot of time talking about it. Basically, it’s a word used to fodder up an animal. It’s a word used to feed an animal. It means to be absolutely satisfied. “They shall be satisfied.” God wants to make us happy and satisfied. Satisfied with what? Well, what are we hungering for? What are we hungering for? Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, they should be satisfied. Isn’t this a fabulous paradox? You’re satisfied, but never satisfied. Isn’t that great? You hunger and thirst and you’re satisfied, but never really satisfied.

Maybe it’s this way: Have you ever had that really great pie your wife makes? I mean the best pie. My wife makes a good lemon pie, a special kind. And I’m always so satisfied when I eat that pie. But I always want more. I’m full, usually, because it’s after dinner, but I always want more because the taste and the fulfillment and the satisfaction of what I’ve already taken makes me want more. And so I’m satisfied but unsatisfied. So it is with righteousness. We are filled and the filling is so sweet and so rich and so full that there’s more that we desire.

The word “satisfied,” we could trace it through the New Testament. It’s just— it’s such a fabulous word. It’s used in many ways. I was thinking here of James 2:16, “And one of you say unto them”— this is a brother or sister who’s destitute— “depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled.” Now, here the idea is satisfied. Just filled up with food, it’s a word used with food. And of course, that’s what Jesus is speaking of, spiritual food. And by the way, the word “filled” is a strong word, *chortaz* in the Greek is a very strong word. It’s a word that means really filled and it’s a great thing to know, people, and I think this is so wonderful. That as Christians, when we seek God’s righteousness, He grants it. You know, the first time you sought His righteousness in salvation, you got it. And then every day after when you sought His righteousness, when you sought to do His will, to fulfill the good pleasure of His will, to obey, to live out His righteousness, He granted that desire. He fills you.

Psalm 107:9, I love it, he says, “He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness.” Isn’t that great? “He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness,” Psalm 107:9. In Psalm 34:10, “But they that seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.” And what does it say in Psalm 23:1? “I shall not”— what?— “want.” “My cup runneth”— what?— “over.” Jeremiah 31, in verse 14 says, “‘My people shall be satisfied with my goodness,’ saith the Lord.” Isn’t that great? “‘My people

shall be satisfied with my goodness,' saith the Lord." Jesus said in John 4 to the woman at the well, "If you drink this water, you will"— what?— "never thirst again." In John 6, He said, "I am the bread of life. Eat this bread, you will never hunger again."

Listen, Jesus satisfies. And yet there is a blessed dissatisfaction that even wants more and more and more and will only be satisfied when we see Jesus Christ. So Jesus is saying this, you can tell a kingdom person. He has a consuming ambition, not for power or pleasure, not for possessions or praise, but for righteousness. So we see then where this fits, what it means, the object and the results.

I'm going to ask you a final question. Personal question. "John," you say, "how do I know if I'm really hungering and thirsting after righteousness?" I'm going to give you a test. Now listen: How do you know? Let me ask you some questions. Number one, here's how you can tell: Are you dissatisfied with yourself? Are you dissatisfied with yourself? Ask yourself that. Thomas Watson, the great Puritan, said, "He has most need of righteousness that least wants it." Are you deeply dissatisfied? Do you find yourself in Romans 7 all the time saying, "Oh, wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Or are you so self-righteous that you think everybody else is wrong and you're right? Are you dissatisfied with yourself? If there is in you any sense of satisfaction, I wonder whether you know what it is to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Do you feel a constant pain, always falling short? Are you like Esau who, when he returned from hunting, it says in Genesis, was almost dead from hunger? Ask yourself: Are you dissatisfied with yourself? That's a symptom of someone who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. And no matter how good they may appear, they still are dissatisfied.

Second: Does anything external satisfy you? Ask yourself that. Do you find things bear influence on how you feel? Feel things go better in your life if you just buy something new? You fill up your appetite with the wrong stuff and then you lose that appetite? Listen to this: A hunger for righteousness will be satisfied with nothing else. You can bring a hungry man flowers, you can bring a hungry man beautiful music, you can take a hungry man pleasant conversation, but all he wants is food. You can take a thirsty person a melody or a rose, but what he wants is water. And one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness will not and cannot be satisfied with anything else.

Let me ask you a third question: Do you have a great appetite for the Word of God? You know when you — it's not pleasant to watch a hungry man eat when he finally gets food. [*Slurp*] See? What's our food? Where do we find the righteousness of God? Here are the rules, the obedience to which brings about righteousness in this word: Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found and I did eat them." Right at it, see? If you're hungering and thirsting after righteousness, you will have such an appetite for the Word that you will devour it. You never— I've never seen anybody beg a hungry man to eat. Have you? We come in here... "Please study your Bible." "Oh, I wish you'd read your Bible." "Oh, if you'd

only read your Bible.” Well, if you’re not hungering and thirsting after righteousness, you’re not functioning as a child of the kingdom should. Maybe you are a child of the kingdom just being sinful. Maybe you’re not even a child of the kingdom, but you’re forfeiting happiness in either condition. Ask yourself: Do you have a great appetite for the Word?

Fourth question: Are the things of God sweet to you? Are the things of God sweet to you? Some of you are going to know what I’m talking about, some of you aren’t, but listen to this— this is so beautiful, Proverbs 27:7. Just listen to this. “To the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet.” Did you hear that? “To the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet.” You know, I can tell somebody hungering and thirsting after righteousness because when God brings devastation in their life, they’re filled and satisfied because they know it’s God, even though it’s painful. Did you get that? There are some people, they can only rejoice when good things happen and when tough things happen, they don’t like it. Well, they’re not hungering and thirsting after righteousness. They’re chasing happiness superficially.

Listen, Thomas Watson says: “The one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness can feed on the myrrh of the gospel as well as the honey.” “To the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet.” Some of us know what it is to have God reprove us. Some of us know what it is to have deep trials. Some of us know what it is to have pain and anxiety and burdens and troubles. And you know something? I can tell you from personal experience in the midst of those, it is as sweet as the good times. It is as sweet as the good times because to the hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet because God is in it, and God is working His purposes, and God is making us more righteous.

Finally, ask yourself if your hunger or thirst is unconditional. Is it unconditional? If you really hunger and thirst after righteousness, it will be unconditional. You say, “What do you mean by that?” Well, you remember the rich young ruler who came and said, “Well, I want to know how I can enter the kingdom,” and the Lord said, “Really? Are you willing to sell all you have and give it to the poor?” “No.” He was hungry, but his hunger was conditional and he never was filled. What about yours? You say, “Oh, I want Christ and my sin, Christ and my pride, Christ and my illicit relationship, Christ and my cheating at school, Christ and my lying in my business, Christ and my covetousness, Christ and my materialism,” Christ and, Christ and. Then you’re not hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

A hungry man does not want food and a new suit. A thirsty man does not want food and a new pair of shoes. Couldn’t care less about the suit and the shoes, just give him the food and the water. Psalm 119:20 says, “My soul breaks— my soul breaks for the longing that it has to thy judgments.”

How did you do on the test? Are you a person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness? Oh, Isaiah said in Isaiah 26:9, “With my soul have I desired thee in the night. Yea, with my spirit within me shall I seek thee early.” See? David thirsted for God early. The wise virgins had their oil before the bridegroom came. They thirsted; they prepared early. And you know what? There are some people



who are going to thirst too late and they're going to be like the rich man in Luke 16:24, they're going to say, "Oh, send someone who can dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I'm tormented in this flame," and they'll finally thirst when there can be no remedy. Thirst now and be filled. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for our fellowship tonight. Thank You for speaking to us in Your Word and thank You for how the Holy Spirit takes these truths and wraps them all around where we are and applies them to us. God, we don't want to push them off on someone else. We want to deal with them ourselves. Make us those who hunger and thirst. And if tonight in our fellowship there might be some who have never hungered and thirsted for salvation, may this be that time. By Your Spirit, break loose the hold of sin. May they be broken in spirit, mournful and meekness may they seek the righteousness that You alone can give and know that without righteousness, no man can see God. And Father, there are some who need to seek righteousness in sanctification. Some of us become so smug and so content, we think we've got it all. Help us to know that that hunger and thirst never ends. Help us to live with hungry hearts to know all that there is to know, to be all that there is to be, until finally we're like Christ when we see Him face to face. We give You the praise in Christ's name. Amen.

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