

Satisfied Matthew 5:6

There have been times when I have been hungry for something and I just don't know what it was. So I'll try eating a few things. I might have a few crackers or chips. No, that wasn't it. So I'll try a piece of bread and butter and maybe add a little jelly. No, that wasn't it either. Sometimes it might be a piece of fruit or some bread and butter pickles. But I still come away not satisfied. Nothing satisfies. Now when dinner is ready and I sit down to a pork chop with mashed potatoes and some peas. That's it.

When it comes to our spiritual appetite, people try snacking on a variety of things, thinking it will somehow satisfy their spiritual hunger only to find that it still leaves them unsatisfied. In our passage today we will discover that there is only one thing that can satisfy our spiritual hunger. It's found in our fourth beatitude.

Matthew 5:6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled or satisfied.”

What does it mean to hunger and thirst after righteousness?

How are they satisfied by righteousness?

Leonard Ravenhill opens his book Revival God's Way: A Message for the Church with a poem which I believe captures the essence of our text, that burning desire to know God, to hunger and thirst after Him and what He offers us.

I have no bow of burning gold
To shoot my arrows of desire;
And yet, O God, I crave a life
That will transmit Thy holy Fire.

I shall not cease from mental strife,
Nor shall my pen sleep in my hand,
Till I have seen God's holy men
Arise and shake our needy land.

The challenge before us is to shake off our spiritual complacency and crave to know God. I mentioned at the beginning of this series on the beatitudes that each one builds on the previous one. Think of them

as links in a chain. We begin with being poor in spirit – recognizing that, spiritually speaking, we are utterly bankrupt without God. Admitting that without Him we are destined to an eternity of separation from Him. We must strip away the will of self and come to God empty and destitute like the tax collector who cried for God to have mercy on him. In that moment of spiritual desperation we mourn over our sin, recognizing that in our lost spiritual condition, we can do nothing about our sin. Our need is to admit that God has provided a way for us to be a part of His kingdom and submit to His will and His way for salvation. Those who are meek have received not only the kingdom of heaven but also inherit the earth. That person is one who pursues godliness as a starving person pursues food.

Let me ask you: **what are you hungering for today?** Jesus tells us there is only one thing that will satisfy.

The central component of this verse is righteousness because that is what Jesus is telling us we are to pursue. If we are to understand why we should go after it, we need to begin with a definition.

I. THE DEFINITION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

If Jesus says that righteousness is something that we are to crave, it stands to reason that it must be something we don't have. **Without righteousness, what is our peril?**

A. Our Peril Without Righteousness

In **Genesis 3** we have the account of Satan through the serpent enticing Eve to eat what God had forbidden. Everything in the garden had been given to Adam and Eve to satisfy them. He warned that the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would result in death if they ate from it. The devil told them that God had misled them, that if they ate from it, they would truly be satisfied because they would become like God knowing good and evil. He told Eve they would not die. So she took the bait and ate and gave some to Adam and guess what, the serpent was right. They didn't die, but then not ever having experienced death in any

form they weren't aware of what it really looked like. But immediately there was an emptiness and an awful feeling in the pit of their soul as they realized something they had not experienced before. They were ashamed, shame that came from guilt, guilt that came from sin. The Bible is clear about us and sin, and its consequences.

Genesis 6:5 “The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”

Psalms 51:5 “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way.”

Isaiah 64:6-7 “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on Your name or strives to lay hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.”

Isaiah 65:2-3 “All day long I have held out My hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations – a people who continually provoke Me to My very face...”

Romans 3:10 “There is no one who is righteous, not even one.”

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death...”

Since the time of Adam and Eve’s sin in the garden we have a destiny apart from God because we have inherited a sin nature that separates us from Him. Jesus said that those who believe will not perish. So it stands to reason that those who don’t believe will perish (**John 3:16**). John writes in his first epistle (**I John 5:11-12**) that if you have Christ, you have life, but if you don’t have Christ, you don’t have life.

Without righteousness that comes through Christ we are in peril. But thankfully, where there is peril due to our lack of righteousness, God has a plan to make us righteous, a righteousness that Paul says is not our own.

B. God’s Plan for Righteousness

Here’s how Paul explains God’s plan.

Philippians 3:3b-9

Here’s Paul’s assessment. He thought he had it made. He compiled all the reasons why he considered himself righteous. He was a Jew – part of God’s chosen people.

As a Jew, he was a stellar example of someone who lived by the law. In his estimation of himself, he considered himself to be flawless. In his opinion, based on all his ethnic and religious credentials, he considered himself righteous, he thought he was in good standing with God. But one day, when he encountered the living Jesus, the very same Jesus whose followers he fought to eradicate, he had a new assessment of himself and found that in a spiritual sense he was not righteous at all, but a sinner. In that moment of self-evaluation he came to the same conclusion as Isaiah when he stood in the presence of God and said “**Woe is me, I am ruined, because I’m a man of unclean lips.**” Paul described himself as wretched. That’s another way of saying “I’m a guilty, vile sinner.” Or “I’m in big trouble, I’m done for because of my sin.”

Paul looked at Christ and concluded that everything he once thought brought him righteousness was now worthless. It had no value when it came to being able to stand before God. He looked good on the outside, but he was a sinner on the inside. He saw that he needed a different righteousness, a righteousness that only God could provide apart from trying to keep the law, and came only through faith in Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Titus 3:5

Romans 8:3 “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness

of sinful man to be a sin offering.”

God’s plan was to take care of our need for righteousness not by anything we could do, but solely by His grace providing the righteousness we need, by sending Christ to be our sacrifice for sin. So when a person believes in Christ by faith, that person is then clothed with the righteousness of Christ so that God only sees us through Christ.

I Peter 2:24 “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.”

I Peter 3:18 “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”

The righteous One gave the unrighteous His righteousness so we could stand before God.

Remember when Joseph was taken out of prison to interpret the king’s dream? Before he could go stand before Pharaoh they had to clean him up. He couldn’t go in his old, shabby prison clothes. They washed him up, shaved him and gave him a new, clean set of clothes, after which he could stand before Pharaoh.

When we trust Christ as Savior, we are stripped of our old spiritual clothes and given the new clothes of His righteousness. That’s what Jesus told the Laodicean church **“I counsel you to buy...white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness.” (Revelation 3:18)**

So what is this righteousness we keep talking about? Simply put, it is being made right with God.

GotQuestions provides a great definition of righteousness. Dictionaries define righteousness as ‘behavior that is morally justifiable or right.’ Such behavior is characterized by accepted standards of morality, justice, or uprightness. The Bible’s standard of human righteousness is God’s own perfection in every attribute, every behavior, and every word. In other words, God sets the bar as to what is righteous and that standard is absolute

perfection because that is His character – perfection in every way. The law as is given in the Bible, both speaks to His character and is the plumb line by which He measures our righteousness. But according to **Romans 3:23**, we have all fallen short of that standard.

The word for righteousness in the New Testament mainly speaks to our conduct toward others and is contrasted with wickedness, which primarily stems from self-centeredness, neither reveres God nor respects man. The Bible makes it clear that we can’t ever possibly attain such a standard by our own efforts. The Bible also makes it clear that only through the cleansing of sin by Christ and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is it possible to achieve a righteousness that God requires and accepts to become part of His kingdom.

II Corinthians 5:21 “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

On the cross, Jesus took our sin and gave us His righteousness so that we could one day stand before God who would not see us in our sin but fully clothed in the robe of Christ’s righteousness. That means we are now made right with God, and it comes through faith. We are accepted by God on account of Christ’s righteousness having been made a new creation. That’s why Paul said it’s a righteousness that is not my own. It’s my belief that the righteousness Jesus is speaking about here is twofold. In the first respect it speaks to salvation.

1. Salvation

In our verse, salvation is implied when we speak about righteousness. Salvation is the result of someone who, by faith, believes in the imputed righteousness we receive through Christ. **Hebrews 12:14** says that no one will see the Lord without holiness. This hungering and thirsting for righteousness is the initial hungering of the person who seeks salvation, who recognizes his spiritual bankruptcy apart from Christ. He mourns over his sin and submits to Christ for salvation having abandoned any self-effort of righteousness. The way it’s worded, Jesus indicates that there is only one way to receive this righteousness, and that only

comes from God.

But the implication goes beyond the act of salvation whereby we receive the righteousness of Christ for salvation and continues on throughout life in what we call sanctification.

2. Sanctification

The simple definition of sanctification means to set apart. In this case, sanctification refers to setting apart to God. At salvation, the believer begins the journey of being set apart to God each day as he yields more of his life to Christ. Jesus will describe what that looks like in the remaining beatitudes: showing mercy, having a pure heart, being a peacemaker, and enduring through persecution.

It's a word that comes from the root for saint and has to do with holiness. In **John 17:17**, Jesus prayed that all His followers would be sanctified by the truth and then stated that His Word was truth. We can say that both salvation and sanctification are related because of a once forever separation to God. Yet, there are days when I don't feel very holy or better yet, days when I am not holy in my actions or attitudes. So there is another side to sanctification that is progressive to which I think Jesus is also speaking of here.

What I mean is that while God sees my standing as holy because He sees me through the righteousness of Christ, I still have this sin problem that I need to shed. So while in my standing I am right with God, in my state I still have lots of work to become more like Christ each day. As you often hear me say: *I'm not what I was and neither am I yet what I'm going to be.*"

I John 3:2-3

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." That's my standing. I belong to Him.

"but it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He [Jesus] appears, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure." That is my state. Each day I pursue Christlikeness in character. Our goal is

righteousness both in our standing and our state. As Peter put it, it is a call to holiness. (**I Peter 1:15-16**)

Alexander MacLaren puts it this way when he writes: **"Righteousness is neither more nor less than in spirit a will submitted to God, and in conduct the practice of whatsoever things are noble and lovely and of good report."**

Paul gives us a picture of what this righteousness looks like in character and conduct by telling us the kinds of things that should not be evident in the life of the believer and what then what we should look like. Things such as unwholesome talk, bitterness, rage, anger, fighting, malice, sexual immorality, impurity, greed, evil desires, idolatry, slander, lying, and that's just the short list.

(Ephesians 4; Colossians 3)

Instead, the person who is growing in Christ should be characterized by attributes of righteousness that include compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, love, joy, peace, self-control, purity, unity, encouragement, edification, imitating God, just to name a few as we become partakers in the righteousness of Christ.

(Ephesians 4; Colossians 3; Romans 12; Galatians 5:22-23; I Corinthians 13)

Think of it as a perpetual state of growing in Christ where, instead of being self-centered, we are other focused because of the new nature that is now in us. Which leads to the next point: the determination for righteousness.

II. THE DETERMINATION FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jesus said **"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness."**

Let's first look at its desire.

A. Its Desire

It's a well-known fact that I like to eat. Sometimes I tell people that I am the original Hungry Howie as you can see my resemblance on the box from my younger days, when I had hair. But my doctor wants

me to lose some weight. I'm not doing any strict diet like Weight Watchers or Nutrisystem. It's primarily just continuing to exercise, cutting out most snacking, reducing portions, trying to eat more fruit and watching how many desserts I eat at fellowship dinners. For the most part, I'm just trying to be sensible without having to watch every calorie. If I did, I'd be closer to my goal.

He wanted me to cut out lunch all together as a partial fast, but I know myself well enough that by the time I got home, I would have hunger pangs that would prompt me to binge on snacks, so I'm just trying to watch what I eat. And yes, some days I get really hungry, and if I am not careful, I hunger for the wrong things.

So here is this admonition by Jesus to hunger and thirst after righteousness. In a physical sense, hunger and thirst are signs of life. A person who has died has no need of food or water. Physically speaking a person can live without food for about a week. Without water it can be a matter of a few days. They are essential to life.

The soul needs nourishment as well. When the soul is starved, it can lead to a hard heart. The desire Jesus speaks of is not passive, but an active or fervent seeking after God's righteousness. Later in this Sermon on the Mount Jesus will tell His hearers that we are to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**). H.A. Ironside describes this hungering and thirsting as a deep, earnest desire.

John Phillips puts it this way: "A person who is desperately hungry or thirsty can think of nothing else. Hungering and thirsting are the most basic drives of our physical nature. No one can ignore them for long."

J.N. Darby said "To be hungry isn't enough; I must be really starving to know what is in God's heart toward me."

To hunger and thirst after righteousness means to be desperate for God. It isn't enough just to mourn over sin, I have to long after His righteousness.

In the story of the prodigal son, he hungered and thirst after the things of the world that he thought would satisfy his soul. After a time of living it up in selfish pleasure, his soul was still empty, so was his wallet and so was his belly. He took a job feeding pigs and even ate some of their food. But as we read on, we learn that he became desperate and in that moment, he remembered how well fed the servants were and he longed even to be treated as a slave. His desperation for food led him back to father.

That's the desperation with which we are to pursue righteousness.

I remember a conversation with Pastor Don who shared about a homeless person who stopped by and wanted some money to buy food. Pastor said he would pay him if he did a little yard work. The man responded by saying he wasn't that hungry. He wasn't desperate enough.

How desperate does our heart long for righteousness, to receive what Christ offers?

Revelation 21:17 "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let Him come; and whoever wishes, let him take of the free gift of the water of life."

Isaiah 55:1-2 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."

You may remember this song:

Like the woman at the well, I was seeking
For things that could not satisfy.

And then I heard my Savior speaking—

"Draw from My well that never shall run dry."

Refrain:

Fill my cup, Lord;

I lift it up Lord;

Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.

Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more.
Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole.

There are millions in this world who are seeking
For pleasures earthly goods afford.
But none can match the wondrous treasure
That I find in Jesus Christ my Lord.

So my brother if the things that this world gives you
Leave hungers that won't pass away,
My blessed Lord will come and save you
If you kneel to Him and humbly pray—

Refrain

Do you have a soul that is empty from wrong
pursuits, thinking that those things will satisfy you?
Is the Spirit of God speaking to your heart
beckoning you to turn away from the junk food of
the world and instead to hunger and thirst after the
righteousness that God alone can give? Thirst after
what will satisfy. Don't drink at broken cisterns.
Don't eat what essentially is moldy bread. Eat what
is freely given and what will fill your empty soul.

C.S. Lewis said "If I find in myself a desire which
no experience in this world can satisfy, the most
probable explanation is that I was made for another
world."

David described his thirsting after God this way.
Psalm 42:1-2 "As the deer pants for streams of
water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul
thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I
go and meet with God?"

David recognizes that nothing else can satisfy the
longing, emptiness of his heart other than God and
says that he is desperate to meet with God. That's
hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

Jesus said He is the bread of life. Anyone who
comes to Him would never go hungry, and whoever
believed in Him would never be thirsty (**Jn 6:35**).
In **John 7:37-38** He extends an invitation to anyone
who is thirsty to come to Him to drink what He
offers and in that person would flow living water.

Tony Evans wonders if Christians are

malnourished, not because we don't eat but because
we eat the wrong things.

The person who hungers and thirsts after
righteousness is the same person who earnestly,
passionately seeks after God's Kingdom far and
above everything else. He is desperate for it. That is
its desire. **What then is its display?**

B. Its Display

**How is hungering and thirsting after righteousness
displayed in the Christian? What are its marks?**

- The person who hungers and thirsts for
righteousness has a dissatisfaction with self.** We
conclude that all our other pursuits are empty.
Thomas Watson says "He has most need of
righteousness that least wants it."
 - The person who hungers and thirsts for
righteousness has a freedom from depending on
external things to satisfy them.** Like Solomon, we
conclude that everything else is just chasing after
the wind and in the end only one thing matters.
Ecclesiastes 12:13 "Here is the conclusion of the
matter: Fear God and keep His commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man."
 - The person who hungers and thirsts for
righteousness will crave after God's Word.**
Jeremiah 15:16 "When Your words came, I ate
them; they were my joy and my heart's delight,
for I bear Your name, O Lord God Almighty."
Job 23:10-12 "But He knows the way that I take;
when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold.
My feet have closely followed His steps; I have
kept to His way without turning aside. I have not
departed from the commands of His lips; I have
treasured the words of His mouth more than my
daily bread." (KJV – necessary food)
- The more we seek His righteousness, the more we
will seek His Word.*
- The person who hungers and thirsts for
righteousness has a desire to be free from the
power of sin.** He longs to be holy and continues to

move in that direction with the help of the Holy Spirit. He pursues Christlikeness wanting to be like Him in character.

I Peter 1:15-16 “Be holy for I am holy.”

5. The person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness desires to be in fellowship with God by confessing sin.

I John 1:3-9

6. The person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will obey God’s Word no matter how demanding.

Psalms 119:19-20 “Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter.”

Psalms 40:8 “I desire to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart.”

Isaiah 26:8-9 “Yes, Lord, walking in the way of Your laws, we wait for You; Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts. My soul yearns for You in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for You.”

7. The person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness realizes that even trials are meant for our good and God’s glory.

Proverbs 27:7 “He who is full loathes honey, but to the hungry even what is bitter is sweet.”

These are just some of the ways hungering and thirsting after righteousness is displayed.

Let’s close with a quick look at the delight from righteousness.

III. THE DELIGHT FROM RIGHTEOUSNESS

Each beatitude begins with a word that describes being blessed or happy for pursuing the action given. Notice our cheer.

A. Our Cheer

We are blessed. Again, blessing or happiness in this sense is not just a feeling based on circumstances. Instead, it is a deep, joy-filled contentment and an

inner spiritual wholeness that only comes from God. The person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness because He has made God’s kingdom his priority is the person who has deep joy no matter what. He has a divinely genuine cheerfulness. That person is truly blessed. Jesus says that person also exhibits contentment.

B. Our Contentment

Jesus says that the person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be filled, will be satisfied. In other words, there is nothing this side of heaven that can ever satisfy the deep spiritual longing that every person has within them. Only the righteousness that God provides by faith through Christ can ever completely satisfy that emptiness.

Our deep spiritual void can only be satisfied by Christ’s righteousness. It’s in the future possessive tense meaning that we will be satisfied, it’s guaranteed. But even though we are satisfied, we will still want more.

Psalms 34:9-10 “Fear the Lord, you His saints, for those who fear Him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”

Psalms 23:1, 5 tell us that the person who seeks the Lord has his cup overflowing.

Psalms 107:9 “He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.”

The person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is filled immediately and continually and will be filled perfectly in heaven. This filling is something only God can do to satisfy our intense desire to have a right relationship with Him.

“Deeply joyful and spiritually whole are those who actively seek a right relationship with God and, in so doing, discover that He alone can completely save and satisfy their souls.”

The question remains for us to ask: **how passionate are we in hungering and thirsting for righteousness?** It is something we are to seek earnestly, deeply, and continuously. If that is your desire, Jesus says you will be satisfied.