



Exploring the Kingdom in Matthew: Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness?

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TEXT: MATTHEW 5:6

Why the question mark in the title? Because who hungers and thirst for righteousness? So an obvious question: What are you hungering and thirsting for?

People “hunger and thirst” for many things, so good, some not so good:

1. Wealth and possessions
2. Power and prestige
3. Fulfillment of physical lusts
4. Status
5. Gifts and leadership
6. Good feelings and self-fulfillment
7. Family and friends
8. Health and well being
9. Fellowship and fun
10. Purpose and meaning

J. Harries wrote, “The natural man may hunger for that which brings him gain, such as wealth, ease, and honour. The raven held a banquet amid the putrefactions of death. Raven-like, unregenerated man seeks to allay his appetites by feeding on the perishable and corrupt. But the Christian’s hunger and his deepest and intensest want is righteousness.” Amen!

- Friends, King Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- Recall that, *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”* (Rom 14:17)
- The word *Righteousness* means “an equity in character, by implication, innocence, holiness.”
- Webster defines it as a *“Purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law. Righteousness, as used in Scripture and theology, in which it is chiefly used, is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity of life to the divine law. It includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion.”*
- **Righteousness denotes not just purity, but a rightness or correctness; it implies justice...that which is good, fair, upright, and unprejudiced. It means thoughts, words, and actions that aligns with truth. To be righteous is to be right.**

RIGHTEOUSNESS, LIKE EACH BEATITUDE, IS A PART OF GOD’S CHARACTER:

- *“Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.”* Psa 116:5
- *“Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.”* Psa 119:142

- "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness." Psa 119:172
- "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Psa 97:2
- "The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." Psa 145:17
- "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus." Rev 16:5

HOW MANY OF US TRULY HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS?

1. To hunger here means "to crave or to be famished." To thirst has a similar connotation. Its image is to be severely parched...to crave that which **sustains**.
2. Charles Spurgeon wrote:

They hunger and they thirst: the most urgent needs of the body are used to see forth the cravings of the soul for righteousness. Hunger and thirst are different, but they are both the language of keen desire. He that has ever felt either of these two knows how sharp are the pangs they bring; and if the two are combine in one craving, they make up a restless, terrible, unconquerable passion. Who shall resist a man hungering and thirsting? His whole being fights to satisfy his awful needs. Blessed are they that have a longing for righteousness, which no one word can fully describe, and no one craving can set forth. Hunger must be joined with thirst, to set forth the strength and eagerness of the desire after righteousness.

3. The Psalms gives us wonderful examples:

- Psa 42:1-3 *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? 3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?*
- Psa 63:1-4 *O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. 3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.*
- Psa 84:2-3 *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. 3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.*
- Psa 143:6 *I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.*

4. I read this recently on hungering and thirsting for Righteousness...

This is a very strong expression. It is no uncommon thing to say, "Oh, I am so hungry, I am so thirsty"; how few of us know what the words really mean! This comparison of hungering and thirsting is a very severe touchstone or test of character. Now, suppose that we try to take to pieces this great idea of righteousness, what does it mean?

In the ordinary details of daily life towards others, for example, it means, briefly, truthfulness, sincerity in speech and conduct, evenhanded justice, unbiased by any thought of our self-interest; kindness, not only as a superfluous overflow of goodness, but as a part of justice, because God has made it our duty to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." It includes spotless honor, considerate thoughtfulness, courtesy, gentleness, the mind of Christ.

What does it mean towards God? It means supreme, heartfelt love, unswerving, prompt obedience, absolute trust, unquestioning, invariable preference of His will, His service, His glory, to any desire or apparent interest of my own. And this does not exhaust the list, but taking it so far, no one can say that there is anything superfluous, anything exaggerated, in any of these details.

Can we honestly say, "That is myself as I would be, as I would fain be, as I strive to be, and pray to be: that is myself as I ought to be: I long, nay, I hunger and thirst to be righteous as He is righteous?"

5. I find myself answering "No" to the above question. How short I've fallen in truly craving Righteousness and holiness. How about you?

- When one is truly hungry and thirsty, one cannot stop **thinking** about food and drink.
- When one is truly hungry and thirsty, one does not worry about appearances.
- When one is truly hungry and thirsty, one's **pride** becomes secondary.
- When one is truly hungry and thirsty, one is not **picky** about the food and drink!
- When one is truly hungry and thirsty, one becomes willing to do whatever it takes to satiate the appetite and thirst.

RIGHTEOUSNESS: THE CALL OF EVERY BELIEVER

- *Zep 2:3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.*

- *Rom 6:13-14 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*
- *2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*
- *Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*
- *Tit 2:11-14 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*
- *1Pe 2:21-25 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

BLESSED FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED!

- Our LORD declares that those who desperately desire righteousness are blessed and their desire will be filled. What is that blessing?
- Certainly, there is the blessing that will come when we are in heaven, enraptured in nothing but Righteousness.
- But Spurgeon gave seven reasons for this *Blessing* I thought worthy of your time:
 1. Why are they blessed ? Well, first, because Jesus says they are; and if he says it, we do not need any further **proof**.
 2. The man hungering after righteousness ought to consider himself a happy man, because he has been made to know the right **value** of things.
 3. Observe, further, that not only does he estimate things correctly, but he has a heart towards that which is **good** and desirable.
 4. He is blessed because in the presence of this hunger, many meaner hungers **die** out.
 5. These men are blessed by being delivered from many foolish **delusions**.

6. Once again: these men are blessed because they are already **worked** upon by the Holy Ghost.
7. Once more: this man is blessed, for in his hunger and thirst he is in **accord** with the Lord Jesus Christ.

May we grow in our spiritual hunger after our LORD, His Kingdom, and the Righteousness thereof, and may we inspire others to do the same. Amen.

FAMILY WORSHIP/PERSONAL DEVOTIONS:

1. Read over this Text and sermon again.
2. Discuss that for which you truly hunger and thirst.
3. Talk about how you might be influenced by worldly hunger.
4. Pray together for renewed passion for God and the things of God.

Catechism

Question: What is repentance unto life?

Answer: Repentance unto life is a saving grace, by which a sinner, being truly aware of his sinfulness, understands the mercy of God in Christ, grieves for and hates his sins, and turns from them to God, fully intending and striving for a new obedience.