

Living the Beatitudes (Part 5)

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst...”

As we unpack the remaining beatitudes, let’s consider the following questions for each:

1. How does this quality of the Kingdom defy the value system of this world?
2. How does this quality of the Kingdom become “salt” and “light” to the world (5:13-14)?
3. How is the reward associated with this quality realized in this life?

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, **for they will be filled.**”

Matt: 5:6

The Hard Sell Beatitude

We have looked deeply into 3 beatitudes that express characteristics of those in God’s Kingdom. Jesus is instructing the disciples of what God’s economy looks like. The poor in spirit, those who mourn, and the meek. They receive the kingdom of heaven, comfort, and inherit the earth. Today we look at Jesus’s statement about righteousness. Looking into the heart.

Why might this be a key trait of citizens in the Kingdom of God? **First a question for each of each of you.** When you hear this beatitude what is your first reaction? How do you relate to this?

Why Hunger and Thirst?

Why do you suppose Jesus used these two verbs? What kind of intensity are we talking about here?

Hunger and thirst are experienced by all peoples. While the intensity and uncertainty of available food/water /drink will vary tremendously across the planet. It is universal. It is frequent, you can even say daily. Jesus audience understood hunger and thirst. They lived in a semi-arid land that had droughts and famines. It is more difficult for us to get a visceral connection to hunger and thirst language. We don’t typically experience that because of abundance for most Americans.

What do you long for, focus on a lot in your life?

hunger - to have an eager desire; **thirst** - to crave vehemently and urgently

(Merriam-Webster)

Jesus perspective of us as followers - Is it better to have a disciple who is aloof or one who is hungering and thirsting for his Kingdom? Think about teachers and students. What student would please a teacher more?

Where else does the Bible speak about hunger and thirst?

Psalm 42 - As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

Psalm 63: 1 - O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Amos 8:11 - The days are coming,"^e declares the Sovereign Lord, "when I will send a famine through the land— not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord.

What is righteousness anyway? or is it justice?

righteousness - the quality of being morally right or justifiable.

Lexico Oxford Dictionary

Definition: the state of being righteous; holiness, purity; uprightness, rectitude, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity life the divine law.

Cambridge Oxford Dictionary - synonyms

goodness, virtue, virtuousness, uprightness, decency, integrity, worthiness, rectitude, probity, morality, ethicalness, high-mindedness, justice, honesty, honour, honourableness, innocence, blamelessness, guiltlessness, irreproachability, sinlessness, saintliness, purity, nobility, noble-mindedness, piety, piousness

What kind of righteousness is Jesus speaking of?

1. personal righteousness - Sally is so good, she does no wrong, a saint, she is a pious and upright person.
2. social righteousness in the world - example, Bryan Stevenson is so committed to those children/adults incarcerated in Alabama prison system to make sure the poor and minorities are not unjustly treated in the criminal justice system.
3. or is it both.

*“Thus if we translate this Beatitude literally we would say, “Happy are those who hunger and thirst for **all** of righteousness, **total** righteousness.” This kind of reading is consistent with the whole body of Jesus’ call to discipleship. Our Lord said that those who would follow him must “deny themselves and take up their cross,” and be ready to “lose their life’ for his sake, Matthew 16:24-25”*

J Ellsworth Kalas

Beatitudes from the Back Side, Theologian , Professor Ashbury Theological

Jesus is speaking of both types of righteousness.

What attributes does the Bible give to righteousness?

Psalm 12:28 - *In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.*

Genesis 6:9 - *These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.*

Proverbs 8:20 - *I walk in righteousness, in paths of justice.*

Psalm 103:6 - *The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly.*

1 Corinthians 1:30 - *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

Often in the Bible you see righteousness used in many contexts. Its mentioned (85 times in NLT). It is often paired with justice. Personally, I’m seeing a tighter relationship between the two. I think we are called to engage with injustice more and more in the world at a personal and corporate level.

Righteousness is doing what is right in the sight of God. This is a simple definition that is far more complex under the surface. To be righteous is to do everything that God calls us to do. The demands of true righteousness are so great and so many that none of us ever in this world achieves it perfectly. It involves following the whole counsel of God.

RC Sproul Reformed Theologian, Presbyterian Church of America, PCA

What will we be Filled / Satisfied with?

When was the last time you were filled/satisfied with anything? What about things of the Kingdom... for example Biblical giving, i.e. no strings attached.

The term *filled* or *satisfied* in the Beatitude means that the pangs of hunger and thirst will disappear. Be filled is a passive verb, An important grammatical point, indicating that God Himself will fulfill our intense desire for right relationship with Him. It's not the result or the performance that brings the satisfaction. It's doing what God directs or nudges you to do.

Ephesians 2:8 - *For by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God. (NIV)*

or

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. (NLT)

What about the converse? If you don't have this attitude, this inner heart stance? If you are a Disciples of Jesus what are the implications for you and me?

Tozer commenting on Matt 5:6

Hunger is a pain. It is God's merciful provision, a divinely sent stimulus to propel us in the direction of food. If food-hunger is a pain, thirst, which is water-hunger, is a hundredfold worse, and the more critical the need becomes within the living organism the more acute the pain. It is nature's last drastic effort to rouse the imperiled life to seek to renew itself. A dead body feels no hunger and the dead soul knows not the pangs of holy desire. "If you want God," said the old saint, "you have already found Him."

*A.W. Tozer,
an American Christian pastor, author, magazine editor, and spiritual mentor*

If you don't have this hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, Ask God for it! Make it meditation or a daily prayer and see what the Holy Spirit will bring your way. God is faithful and just to his sheep.

A perpetual appetite for virtue and justice will guide us to the attainment of that desire - a development and reformation to righteousness.

Johnnie Moore, Liberty University