

AN APPETITE FOR THE THINGS OF GOD: Matthew 5:6

Reading: Matthew 5: 1-16.

This is now looking at the things that need to be true about us as people. We have seen that there needs to be an absence of self-centredness. We are not trying to impose ourselves but recognize that we are needy people, dependent upon God. But we are not empty of positive things. This verse takes us to the real heart of who we are. It makes us look at what is our heart's desire. In this verse there is a condition and promise. Key to understanding this is the word 'righteousness'. Do we confine it to solely meaning justification? Or is there more to what God is showing us here? In context, it would include justification but then go beyond this to also include the thought of inner conformity to the character of God. In other words, it expresses a desire to live as Christ lived.

1. Righteousness as justification.

Justification as meaning God's forgiveness to undeserving sinners and His willingness to acquit them, meets the deepest need of the human soul. This is the initial hunger that we have, to have peace with God. It is the hunger of the prodigal, far away in a foreign country. The world cannot meet the needs of the heart. There is always a need for more and there is never satisfaction and peace in the world. People are always looking out for more wealth, more fame, bigger homes. Yet for all we might have, there is no answer to the guilt in the heart of man, the unresolved sense of alienation ultimately from God Himself. There is no rest but man seeks for that which would give him peace but is unaware where to find it. There is a willingness to believe in some spiritual reality but no recognition that Christ alone is the answer to the soul's needs.

The journey ends when we find the Lord and see that Christ meets the deepest needs of the soul. We come home to God. We find the pearl of great value. We are now able to find the rest that we could not find before. The Bible becomes a living book and it is able to instruct and satisfy us (See Psalm 19: 10-11; Psalm 119:24, 46-47, 72). Finding God's forgiveness, through the Lord Jesus Christ, brings peace to the soul (Romans 5:1). Here there is a righteousness in respect of good standing with God which is graciously conferred on us (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). We lose the dread of death and judgment. We have peace for the conscience. We do not feel compelled to try to work for our salvation. God looks on us as well pleasing to Him as though we have fulfilled the law.

2. Righteousness as Christ-likeness.

Now that we are justified, we have a new nature. We now have new desires, respect new laws and follow new rules. We are now taken up with Christ and He is now our everything and all-in-all. We draw upon our justification, recognising the significance of this relationship we now have with God and drawing strength from it. From where we now are we draw certain conclusions.

We see that sin is terrible. It makes us shudder. We see how it earned us the wrath of God and was sending us to hell. We see that it made the Lord to have to suffer on our behalf. We want sin no more. We do not want to be dominated and ruled by it. We see what injury it has caused to ourselves and to others. We see the hurt and harm caused.

We now see ourselves under obligation to God. We are awed by Him and take Him seriously. We see that we were bought at a price and that we are now in His service. We wish to honour Him and to have Him Lord over us.

We are grateful to Him. We see that knowing Him is the best thing that ever happened to us. We want to know about this Being who has shown us such kindness. We want to conform to His expectations. Receiving this gift of salvation, we now want to know what we are to do with this gift. Like when we receive an inheritance, we would ask what our father would have wanted us to do with it.

Now we want to grow into Christ-likeness. What we see in Him we love, and we want to be the same. We are right to believe that we can get nearer and nearer to Him, that God has power to help us to be this. We read about the moral life He desires and this is what we want to be as well (Colossians 3:9-11; Ephesians 4:20-24). We become more and more in love with Him, and delight in His law (Romans 7:22). We see His commandments as good and we see them perfectly fulfilled in Him. We believe that it is in our best interest to be holy (2 Peter 1:10-11).

Being filled, as it is spoken about here, is to be satisfied in the Lord. When we are becoming more holy then there is more delight we can take in the Lord. We find our delight in doing His will and knowing more and more of His love. It is all so much more satisfying than anything the world is able to give us.