

### Mt 5:3-12

3 **“Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

4 **Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.**

5 **Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.**

6 **Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.**

7 **Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.**

8 **Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God.**

9 **Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.**

10 **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

11 **“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

If you were to ask Carla, what concept has Jon been talking about lately because he does not feel **he grasps it**, she might immediately think that it **should be** the need to clean up the dirt I make when I put wood in the woodstove. But she would **probably** tell you, “He does not feel he is doing justice to this idea of **hungering and thirsting** after righteousness sake.” This is the problem I have faced.

1 **How do I know** if I am hungering and thirsting for righteousness

And

2 What part **can I play** in this process?

I just could not go on without revisiting this. If this is the path to blessedness, we have really **got to** understand this.

We started with an inner realization that we as humans are poor in spirit. We are beggars in spiritual matters. We need to live off the grace of someone external to us.

Then we mourned as we saw **ourselves** as we **truly are** and the **world** as it **truly is**. We are still looking at ourselves.

Then we move on to meekness which is the recognition of what kind of attitude a person like ourselves needs to have toward God. We must surrender to Him, with our eyes always upon Him for our direction and provision.

In this passage we are told about a dynamic that must be **present in us** but its whole **focus** is on **God**. We must have this driving hunger and thirst for righteousness, this deep desire for a restoration of our **lives** and **attitudes** to **rightness**.

And to the **degree** we do this, we will be **immediately filled** with that we need now, and one day we will be **ultimately satisfied** to never need this longing again.

Now we need to notice **first** that this promise is granted for something that we ourselves are **incapable** of producing. We must hunger and thirst for righteousness. And we see people in scripture who did just that, using those very words. Jesus told the woman at the well that those who come to Him **with that thirst** would **never thirst again**.

But do you know a single verse that tells a person who is not hungry and thirsty for God **how to BE** hungry and thirsty for God?

What we see, right off the bat, is that the **desire for God** and the **satisfaction of that desire by God** are both the **works of God**. That is what we continually preach.

Now there are those who preach decisional regeneration. And many who preach that would hasten to say that a spiritual life **must, by necessity** follow that decision, if the decision is real. Those folks, even if their doctrine might be incorrect, are not likely to lead people astray.

But there is a dangerous application of this, (what I believe to be), false idea of **decisional regeneration**. This is the idea that it is **your decision** to pray the sinner's prayer **that saves you**. This idea is that if you make the decision to do this, and you really really mean it, you are saved. These ill informed teachers might say it **would be good** if you obey God. That puts you in the better seats. But if you choose not to, well, **God's hands are pretty well tied** at that point. You prayed the prayer and He has to let you in.

Now look at our verse today. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. And Jesus is talking about all true believers. We immediately see that the person who **simply prays a prayer**, and no change follows, is clearly not a believer at all. A believer is someone who **survives** and **thrives** on the grace of God. We come to God and miraculously see ourselves in the state we are truly in. The Holy Spirit shines the light of God on our lives. We repent. And we submit. But there is more than that. A change happens where we **hunger for God**. Instead of hating the light, we now cannot get enough of

it. This is way more than a **human decision** to follow God. This is a miracle of God in **epoch** proportions. And it is He who both provides the **light** and He who provides the **hunger**. He **makes us hungry** and He **satisfies the hunger**. Praise be to God. We feast on His grace.

So this “hungering and thirsting for God” principle helps us to test our doctrine to see if it is accurate.

But it also helps us to test ourselves. This is another one of those **tests of life** that we learned about in 1 John. This is another one of those **life monitors**. If we are alive in Christ, we will hunger and thirst for righteousness. And if we hunger and thirst, there will be the evidence of filling. We **are** filled and we are **being** filled. And if these people are being filled, to **that degree** they will **be happy**.

OK, so what are some of the evidences of our **hungering and thirsting** for God which will be **evident** in **His filling**, this **being satisfied**?

This was something that was very important for me to understand. I do not want to ever create an inaccurate view of the Christian life. I do not want to create expectations higher or lower than what they should be. I do not want to **induce false guilt** or to encourage **spiritual slothfulness**. The goal is accuracy.

Well what is the first satisfaction we must have? What is it that we know that Christ died to provide us? There are many things, but when we preach the gospel we often start with this. **Our guilt**. A satisfied person starts with understanding and appreciating that our sin has been forgiven.

**Romans 5:1**

**5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

This is one of the first satisfactions we must have. The satisfaction of forgiveness. If we are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, the **satisfaction of forgiveness** is the natural satisfaction. Are you satisfied there? Are you **hoping** you are forgiven? Or do you **know it** beyond a shadow of a doubt? Do you believe that you now wear the righteousness of Christ as your robe? Do you really believe these substantial things are true of you? Do you know that Christ has not only **forgiven your sin** but He has **given you a new life**. Has brother John assured your heart that **it is well with your soul**? Ok so if you are solid on the point of **justification**, if you are

satisfied on that point, how about the satisfaction on the **process of sanctification**? The process of **living out** a righteous life? What satisfaction have you received there?

Is God satisfying you with **His sufficiency to empower your sanctification**? Isn't it true that we can easily buy into our justification because **Christ** did all that. But what about our **sanctification**? Aren't we a bit shaky on that because we feel that relies upon us. Look what scripture says to those who are hungering and thirsting to change to be more like Christ.

### **Philippians 2:12-13 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

<sup>13</sup> for it is **God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**

Isn't it wonderful to know that **even as we are working**, the end result does not rely upon our works but upon **God's work**. Yes, we **must** work. It is assumed in every new testament command. But we do not **cause** that work, nor do we **determine** its results. So even as we are **carrying out the process of sanctification** we are **receiving satisfaction** from God. Look at just a few other things God has to say about His part in that process.

### **John 14:16-17 (NKJV)**

**16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--**

**17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.**

### **Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the **author and finisher of our faith**,

Do you hear that. Jesus does more than **justifies us** and then leaves us on our own. He **created** the project and He will **finish** the project. And the project is our faith.

### **1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> **For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not**

**as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**

We see here that the Word of God is effectively working in us. This happens to us as we read and study.

**Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV)**

**<sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,**

Here is the God who can do all those amazing things, better things **than we can imagine**. And it is **He** who is exerting the power that works in us.

**Romans 8:26-27 (NKJV)**

**<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.**

**<sup>27</sup> Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.**

Look at this. Even our well meaning prayers will be transformed into that which is truly good. We have a **prayer fixer**. He conforms what **we ask** into what **we should** ask. And He will get that for us.

**2 Corinthians 3:5 (NKJV)**

**<sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being from ourselves*, but our sufficiency is from God,**

Where does our sufficiency to do God's work come from? Naturally, **from God**, not us.

So we just touched on the satisfaction we should be receiving. Are we? Are these the things that are calming our hearts? They should be. If we are hungering and thirsting for God, these should be some of the things we are satisfied with.

Also think about it. If we are walking in the Spirit, right **living** and **being** would have to be the result of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. How could you walk in the **Spirit of righteousness** without being one who wants righteousness. So what is the satisfaction of walking in the Spirit?

The fruit of the Spirit.

Gal 5:22-25

**<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its**

**passions and desires.** <sup>25</sup> **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**

Do you want to know if Christ is **satisfying** your righteous hunger and thirst? Take each of these words in the list. First ask yourself if they are yours **to any degree**. If they are not, you are probably not even in the Spirit. You need to come to Christ and ask Him to save you.

But if you believe yourself to be **in the Spirit**, of being in Christ, then take this list and take it to God.

Pray through the list asking God to show you if you are more of each of these things than you were a month ago, a year ago, a decade ago.

Are you more loving?

Are you more joyful?

Are you more peaceful?

Do you see what I mean?

Who here has the courage to do such a thing? It may be wonderfully affirming to you. Or it could be highly convicting to you? Or both. Do you have the courage to take the time and do this exercise?

If we are hungering and thirsting for righteousness sake, these are the kinds of things we should be **getting filled** with, **getting satisfied** with.

Our brother Jones adds this- First he mentioned other results promised in scripture. He continues with this.

**Are we enjoying peace with God? Do we rejoice in the Lord always? Those are the tests that we must apply. If we are not enjoying these things, the only explanation of that fact is that we are not truly hungering and thirsting after righteousness. For if we do hunger and thirst we shall be filled. There is no qualification at all, it is an absolute statement, it is an absolute promise—‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.’**

There is something else to add here to determine if we are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Those who see themselves as **already righteous** do not **hunger** for righteousness. They just see themselves as being rough around the edges. They just need a few tweaks. They just need to try a few more things and they will be ok.

People who believe their righteousness **to be intact** will never hunger and thirst for righteousness. Why would they?

It is only people who have a **deep awareness** of their **spiritual poverty** that will hunger and thirst for righteousness. Do you wonder sometimes why God allowed you to do some of the wrong things you have done? Do you wonder why He let it last **so long** or happen **so often**? He could have **easily** stopped you. He could have **easily** changed your circumstances. But He didn't protect you from yourself and your own decisions. Why?

**Successes** that are **circumstantial** do not prove anything about our character. But our **failures** due to our circumstances **do**. And the person who God is dealing with must **see themselves clearly**. They must sometimes be **shocked enough** by their failure to see **their need** of God's intervention. A person who has not been poor in Spirit, a person who has not mourned their own sin, is **not yet ready** to hunger and thirst for righteousness. I think in most cases, if our failure **was not necessary** for our future success, God would have **rescued** us from it. Our failures often **precede** our hunger for something different. They are **exceedingly useful** in God's redemptive plan. God **wants us** to hunger and thirst for His righteousness. And we must first see just how **desperate our case really is** before we will see the need to get with the program.

Do you want to see what people are like who hungered and thirsted for righteousness? Read about the people that God said were faithful. There are even people like Samson thrown in there to let us know it won't always be pretty. But we can learn much by wanting **to be** like the good examples of the heroes of the faith.

Now, we are still left with the second question I posed at the beginning of this talk. I believe we answered the first question to some degree- **1 How do I know if I am hungering and thirsting for righteousness**

Now for the second-

## **2 What part can I play in this process?**

You might observe, and it is very true, that we cannot produce spiritual hunger and thirst. I am not aware of anything in scripture that tells us **how** to produce that in ourselves. If you know differently I am truly open to hearing about it. But this appears to me to be something that only God can do to us. So is it entirely passive? Do we just wait to have it and until that point we do nothing? Should we have the attitude that if we are not hungry for God, that is God's fault?

Well let's think about that a bit.

If you have been responsible for a small child, and that child wanted a substantial portion of food at 4pm, what are you likely to tell that child? You are likely to say, “You cannot have that now.” Why? “It will spoil your supper.”

We all understand how hunger works. We take steps to guard ourselves from filling ourselves with things that will stifle our hunger. So I may not be able to provide myself with righteousness, but I can choose to avoid those things that are **unrighteous**. I cannot, by the force of my will, make myself more like Christ. But I can choose not to do those things that will make me more like the devil.

Now there are things that are openly evil. To sit around and foster hateful thoughts or envious thoughts or coveting thoughts or lustful thoughts is clearly evil. And we do well to **run** from those things or to **do battle** with those things, whichever is more appropriate. We know this intuitively. We should not be doing the things on the “don’t do” lists in scripture. That is Christian discipleship 101.

But that is not all that **competes** for our **affections** and **steals** our **attention**. What else causes our spiritual pursuit to wane? What good thing gets lofted to a position that **they should not hold** in our lives? These are lawful things. They are not on the “don’t do” lists. They are on the **permissible** list. But they distract us from the important things. If we find that our habitual practice of those things causes us to become more spiritually lethargic, if the pursuit of the things leads us to be less involved in spiritual things, if we find ourselves with **not enough time left** to carry out our **spiritual disciplines**, we should temper their use until they have **no negative affect** on our spiritual walk. We cannot afford to eat at 4 pm and have our appetite for the dinner meal be removed. Is there something that causes you to want spiritual things less? Then temper or remove your use of them.

Now what else can we do? How can we **foster** this hunger and thirst for righteousness that God provides?

We looked last week where Jesus said **Matt 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.** The Bible does not paint a picture that Spiritual Growth happens with no effort. The Bible tells us over and over again **the part that we must play** in our sanctification. Jesus told us what we must **love first** with our lives. He said that the greatest commandment was to love the Lord our God with all our

heart, soul, mind and strength. This passage in Matt 6:33 tells us what we should **seek first** with our lives. The kingdom of God and His righteousness. Now do any of us here really think that **this will just happen to us** as we fill ourselves with the world's entertainment and the world's news and the world's music? Do we think it will somehow **move upon us** to do all the things we know we should be doing? If so we have not been paying attention to ourselves or our Bibles. The default position of flesh is to **drift** from God. If you allow flesh to rule you will **worry about** what you **will eat** and what **you will wear** and all the **bad things that can happen to you**. Flesh does that. It is good at it. It does not need trained. If you do not control yourself, it will just happen.

We must **discipline** ourselves to **do the things** that lead to spiritual growth. **Seek** is a command just as **love God** is a command. It is **something we do**. And as we do it, it shapes us. It changes us. The day by day disciplines are necessary. When is the last time you read or listened to the Word? When is the last time you filled free time with activities **specifically designed** to help you grow? When is the last time you took time to pray? How high do you prioritize the **things of God** and the **people of God**? Inertia creates stagnation. And flesh loves inertia. Do you want to grow? Don't **intend it** and think that your intentions prove your love. Put it on the **calendar**. Put it on your **to do list**. Add it to the **must do** activities in your life.

I challenge us all to look at our lives and prayerfully, before God, examine how we use our time. Time is the stuff our lives are made of. You cannot give your **heart** to God without giving your **time** to God. Following God means placing **first things first**. The **first things** are the things we refuse to go through the day without. Imagine if **knowing Christ** better took on more importance in our lives than **having supper**. How many days in the last year did you go without food? How many days have we gone without spending time with God? Do you see what I mean? Christians don't **grow accidentally**. They grow based on **their commitment**.

What does the proof of our life say? If you are like me, it is **mixed** evidence. Is having the righteousness of Christ exhibited in our lives of **utmost importance** on our calendars and our to-do lists? Do we desire **above everything else** to know God and please Him? Do we really want rid of self in all of its forms, even the acceptable ones that no one but God will know about? Do we want to live **always** and **only** for His glory? That is clearly how it

should be. Will this drive us to call upon Him to help us to move in His direction? Will we commit ourselves to make first things first in our lives? I would like to quote brother Jones one more time.

**If only we knew something of the glory and the wonder of this new life of righteousness, we should desire nothing else. Therefore let us look at the Lord Jesus Christ. That is how life should be lived, that is what we should be like. If only we really saw it. Look at the lives of His followers. Wouldn't you really like to live like those men, wouldn't you like to die like them? Is there any other life that is in any way comparable to it—holy, clean, pure, with the fruit of the Spirit manifesting itself as 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance'. What a life, what a character. That is a man worthy of the name of man; that is life as it should be. And if we see these things truly, we shall desire nothing less; we shall become like the apostle Paul and we shall say, 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.' Is that your desire? Very well, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock (and go on knocking), and it shall be opened unto you.' 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled'—with 'all the fullness of God'.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd-Jones, D. M. (1976). [\*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount\*](#) (Second edition, pp. 97–98). England: Inter-Varsity Press.