

“Kingdom Come”

Sermon on the Mount Series: Fourth Lesson

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” (Matthew 5:6)

Introduction

- Do we seek experience and personal fulfilment or righteousness? The former are not wrong, but righteousness is more fundamental and foundational.
- If we do not desire this more than anything then pursuing the former will lead to shallowness and an addiction to ever-increasing emotional highs. We will not achieve happiness by pursuing it.
- “Blessed are people who have a deep unmet longing to see righteousness happening in the world.”, A Kingdom of Blessings - Gospel of Matthew Part 5, Tim Mackie.

1. What it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness

- Hunger and Thirst:
 - If we are in pain we want to relieve it. But a doctor will have a deeper duty to discover the cause of the pain. If he only treats the pain he may miss something far more important and deadly. Similarly we have a hunger and thirst provided by God – if we meet that hunger in the wrong way we run the risk of spiritual death.
 - “According to the Scriptures happiness is never something that should be sought directly; it is always something that results from seeking something else.”
 - Food and drink are essential to life – so is righteousness for a Christian. There is a painful hunger that only righteousness can satisfy. It should be consistent – unlike Hosea 6:4. Psalm 42 sums this up.
- Righteousness
 - Righteousness (and the kingdom, which is what the SOM is about) is the priority – Matt 6:33.
 - If more and more people pursued righteousness the world would be a much better place. The way to change society is to preach the gospel. It is “the great charter for every seeking soul, the outstanding declaration of the Christian gospel to all who are unhappy about themselves and their spiritual state, and who long for an order and quality of life that they have not hitherto enjoyed.”
 - Righteousness – in this context not that given us by God to be in right relationship with Him, but a pattern of life lived in conformity to His will. See also vv 10 & 20.
- Three aspects to ‘righteousness’ in the Bible:
 - i) **Legal** – i.e. right relationship with God – not the point here since Jesus is addressing people who are already in a right relationship with him. Remember, he is talking about the characteristics of his Kingdom people – not those who want to know how to enter the Kingdom. He talks about that elsewhere (Matthew 13 parables). Mind you, perhaps he is reminding his disciples of the kind of attitude that is necessary for others to enter his Kingdom, since he knows that they will be commissioned to ‘catch men’. Lloyd-Jones makes big play of what he sees as the doctrinal aspect of this verse. He views the verse as a statement of salvation by grace. “In many Old testament passages ‘righteousness’ is synonymous with ‘salvation’ ...” – Is 45:8, 46:12-13, 51:5, 56:1, 61:10. However, it should also be noted that the concept of ‘salvation’ in the Old Testament included more than simply being in a right relationship with God.
 - ii) **Moral** – i.e. right character and conduct that pleases God – contained in this verse and subsequent parts of the SOM (v20). It contains the idea of sanctification. A desire to be free from sin’s power and to be right with God in ongoing relationship. A desire to be free from the desire of sin. A desire to walk with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the light of fellowship (1 John 1:5). A desire for holiness. “His supreme desire it to be like Christ.” Growing in the fruits of the Spirit is a sign of being filled which is a sign of hungering and thirsting after

righteousness. “Christ pronounces ‘blessed’ not those who are full of righteousness, but those who ‘hunger and thirst’ after it.”

- iii) **Social** – i.e. “social righteousness, as we learn from the law and the prophets, is concerned with seeking man’s liberation from oppression, together with promotion of civil rights, justice in the law courts, integrity in business dealings and honour in home and family affairs.” Luther said that we need a, “hunger and thirst for righteousness that can never be stopped or sated, one that looks for nothing and cares for nothing except the accomplishment and maintenance of the right, despising everything that hinders this end. If you cannot make the world completely pious, then do what you can.”
- We know when we’ve grasped this when “righteousness has become ... the most eminently desirable thing in the world.” Also when we have no smug sense of self-satisfaction about our own ‘righteousness’. We must have the attitude of Paul (**Phil 3:7-11, Rom 7:18**).
- Many promises from God to the hungry: **Ps 107:9**. Therefore, if we are not growing does that mean we are not hungry?
- QUESTION: “What would it look like for you to hunger and thirst after righteousness?”

2. What it means to be filled

A. ‘Filled’

- Followers of Jesus will be satisfied, but being filled is also on-going. Jesus gives water that means we don’t have to be thirsty, but since this in the context of having a relationship with him, it also means we need to keep drinking.
- We should not be hungry for salvation if a Christian (as in uncertain of it), but we should be hungry for growth, for sanctification, for the work of the Spirit in our lives.
- We desire ‘perfection’ and must press on.

B. Biblical examples & principles

- Paul: **2 Tim 1:12** – he knew Christ. **Phil 3:10** – wants to know him better.
- Not until the next life will we know no hunger or thirst – **Rev 7.16-17**.
- Only in the next life will righteousness reign supreme and be fully rewarded – **2 Peter 3:13**. That is the ‘home of righteousness’ and not this world where we continue to hunger and thirst – and find on-going but not ultimate satisfaction.
- “the Lord gives this famished person the desires of his heart.” Carson, 26

QUESTION: “What does it mean to you to be ‘filled’ in this way?”

3. How these truths affect the way we live

- The call is not passive. Although we can do nothing to ‘increase’ our own righteousness in God’s eyes, we are still responsible for hungering and thirsting after the right things.
- One thing this involves is avoiding the things that are opposed to righteousness. I may not be able to fly, but I can stay out of the gutter.
- We will also avoid the things that dull our spiritual appetite – even if they are not directly sinful. No ‘eating between meals’.
- We are capable of being proactive in seeking righteousness. But it takes concentration and effort – it is not automatic or a default setting we don’t need to maintain.
- Some things that encourage the right appetite:
 - The company of godly men and women
 - Time in the Bible
 - Time in Prayer
 - Reading godly books

QUESTION: “What would your life look like with an on-going and growing hunger and thirst for righteousness?”