

Matthew 5:6

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[0:00] Please take out your copy of God's Word and turn to the Gospel according to Matthew chapter 5. While you're getting there, Alex, I never heard the battle shield verse of Be That My Vision.

! That was great. Thank you, brother, for sharing that one with us. That may need to be a permanent fixture in that song. Clay said the next step is that we sing it in Gaelic. This morning we're going to continue our careful consideration of the Sermon on the Mount. Recall that this sermon is a declaration of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And we rightly understand that the Kingdom has come because the King has come. Matthew records for us in Matthew chapter 4 and verse 17.

From that time, Jesus began to preach the beginning of His ministry, saying, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

[1:09] Recall also that Jesus begins His sermon with declarations of blessedness for a people with particular characteristics.

He's showing us what those who are citizens of this coming Kingdom look like. He has declared blessed those who recognize their spiritual poverty.

Those who come before God with nothing in their hands but an appeal to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And He says they're blessed because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

He has declared blessed those who mourn over their sinful state and over the sinful state of the world around them. The sin-sick nature of the place in which they live.

And He declares them blessed for they shall be comforted. He has declared blessed those who understand what they truly deserve.

[2:15] Do not seek retribution when wronged, but trust in God's sovereign goodness and His final making of all things right.

And they're declared blessed for they shall inherit the earth. So join me now in considering the fourth of Jesus' declarations of blessedness in Matthew chapter 5, verse 6.

Before I read it, beloved, I remind you that this is God's Word to us. It was written for His glory and for our good.

And as such, we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Matthew chapter 5, verse 6. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Now, as I've done over the past few weeks, I want to work through the single verse with a series of questions. And I am going to take you elsewhere in the Scripture today.

[3:23] So I'm going to encourage you to pull your ribbon marker out and stick it in Matthew chapter 5 as I take us to other places. The first question I want to ask is simply, and most importantly, what is meant by those who hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Let's first think a little bit about this phrase, hunger and thirst. Now, last week's text, Matthew 5, verse 5, was a direct citation of Psalm 37, verse 11.

I helped explain that to you and showed you a bit of the context of Psalm 37. In Matthew 5, verse 6, Jesus is not directly citing any Old Testament text, but he is drawing on metaphors that his listeners would have been familiar with.

It is understood that Jesus' primary audience, the Sermon on the Mount, would have been Jewish listeners, and that Matthew's account, his gospel account, is particularly aimed at Jewish listeners. That means we have to do a little extra work. I'm assuming most of us, maybe none of us, are of Jewish descent, certainly not familiar with the Old Testament text the way they would have been.

[4:39] But these metaphors that he draws on, they would have been extremely familiar with. I'm going to show you just two examples that are statements of hungering and thirsting that end up with negative results, but he's drawing on these types of metaphors to help us understand what it means to hunger and thirst for anything, in this case, righteousness.

The first is from Isaiah chapter 55, verse 2, and the first half of verse 3, which reads, So God, speaking metaphorically through the prophet Isaiah, says, Stop trying to satisfy yourself with anything other than me.

He's saying, I am the rich food that your soul needs. I am your sustenance. Another text, an example of this metaphor Jesus is drawing on, Jeremiah chapter 2, verses 12 and 13.

This is from our Bible reading a couple of weeks ago, if you're keeping up with us on this, where we read, Be appalled, O heavens, at this.

Be shocked. Be utterly desolate or dismayed, declares the Lord, for my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

[6:41] This time, God, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, speaks metaphorically of himself as an unending source of life. Water bringing forth life.

And an ending source of it. A fountain of living water. And he accuses his people of seeking life in a way that will never satisfy their thirst.

They're digging for themselves wells that won't hold life-giving water at all. So food and water are the most basic of human needs.

And I think we take that for granted. There is food and water everywhere in the place that we live. You can walk out in the hallway and drink as much filtered water as you want to from a water fountain right now.

Right? We don't quite appreciate in Jesus' day how much work it was to obtain sustenance and to have clean, safe water for drinking.

[7:44] But surely this is at the very core of life. A person does not last long without one, and certainly not long at all without both.

So Jesus is speaking of our most basic human need as he picks up this metaphorical language. It's very possible that none of us have really ever, in the temporal sense, hungered and thirsted.

The way these people would have understood what it means to be hungry and to be thirsty. So we have to apply our mindsets. We have to try to imagine the type of longing that Jesus here is speaking of.

And what is it that he says we should hunger and thirst for? Righteousness. Why did Jesus say that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are going to be satisfied, are blessed, and not instead those who hunger and thirst for God?

In Isaiah 55.3, which I just read to you, what does he say is the place of sustenance? What is the bread, the rich food that God's people should buy?

[9:07] He says it's himself. He says, come to me. In Jeremiah 2.13, which I just read, there's two evils. First, that they've forsaken me.

They've turned away from me, this source of water, living water, and they've turned elsewhere, failing sources of water.

An additional Old Testament reference, Psalm 42, verses 1 and 2, likely familiar with, as a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants or thirsts my soul for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? So why?

Why does Jesus say, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and not those who hunger and thirst for God? I have to imagine, and I think that good exegesis has to be intermingled with a bit of imagination, that his listeners cocked their heads a little sideways when he said that, instead of hungering and thirsting for God, because they would have been familiar with these texts.

[10:24] Isaiah 55, Jeremiah 2, Psalm 42. Why does he say, hunger and thirst for righteousness?

At the outset of our study, just a few weeks ago, I posited to you that in the Sermon on the Mount, two major things emerge.

The second of those that I posited to you, which we have been dealing with now at length, and will continue to deal with, is this idea of human flourishing, blessedness.

What does it mean for us to be doing well in the world? Citizens of God's kingdom, Jesus is saying to us, will flourish. They will have joy, and comfort, and peace, and satisfaction.

We have seen, and we're going to continue to see, that the type of flourishing that happens in God's kingdom often runs, rubs right up against, pushes against, stands in contradiction to the world's concept of the same.

[11:34] So that's one theme we've been looking at, and we'll continue to. The first that I presented to you was the idea of whole person righteousness.

Whole person righteousness. Jesus corrects in this sermon the misunderstanding that God is only concerned with action.

Citizens of God's kingdom will not only honor God with their actions, but also with their thoughts, and their intentions, and their motivations, and their motivations, and on, and on, with every bit of their being.

We sang Deuteronomy 6-5 this morning with the kids. Not by design, but how wonderful, a song for us to sing. This very command that we should love the Lord our God with all of us.

Every bit of us. Leveraged off into His direction. This beatitude picks this up. This theme speaks to this whole person righteousness theme.

[12:42] Let me show you elsewhere in the sermon. So in Matthew 5, verse 20, Jesus says, For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

So He's addressing this issue of the day. A great issue in Jesus' day and a great issue in our day as well of rampant hypocrisy.

Many declared and declared to love God with their lips, put on a pretty good show to convince others of the same, the outward trappings of religion, of devotion to God.

But they denied and deny a love for Him which totally permeated their lives. Thoughts, intentions. John the Baptist says, You brood of vipers to the Pharisees.

Who everyone else would have looked at them and said, They've got it together. These men know how to rightly worship God. And they were indicted for being whitewashed tombs.

[14:00] Jesus declares the woe to them. Whitewashed tombs. You look nice on the outside but inside you're full of dead people's bones. Jesus is trying to correct this.

He's saying it's not just outside. That you can put on the trappings of religion that all of you is devoted to me. Further on, in the conclusion of this sermon in Matthew chapter 7.

And these should be scary words to us, beloved. Verse 21-23. Jesus says, In a warning to us to not deceive ourselves, He says, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

On that day, the end day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, do we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name?

And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. So we see here that there are people who are doing things in the name of Christ and it would seem miraculous things in the name of Christ.

[15:25] I don't know any of you who have done miraculous things in anybody's name, but here are people who at least appear to have done some rather miraculous things, but they're not keepers of God's law.

They don't have this whole person righteousness that we're talking about here. Jesus says to them, I never knew you. Depart from me.

the Beatitudes, beginning in Matthew 5, and everything that follows in this sermon is Jesus' very careful work of teaching His listeners then and this morning that a life that is pleasing to God encompasses our whole being.

He's getting in and He's mixing it up. He's making very careful, precise cuts to help us to see that there's nothing we can do to be accepted by God.

Poor in spirit. By His grace to us in the personal work of Jesus Christ, we can stand right. We can be righteous before Him.

[16:36] And all of our lives can and should be given to Him. those who belong to the kingdom of heaven who have been saved by God through the personal work of Jesus Christ will, at our core, long, desire, deeply desire, hunger and thirst for righteousness.

We will desire above every other desire to serve the King of the kingdom that we are citizens of. On your bulletin this morning, a C.S. Lewis quote for you.

I hope this one's familiar to you, but I think it's apt in this particular spot. He wrote, If I find in myself a desire, so read there, hunger and thirst for righteousness, a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

I'm a citizen of a different kingdom because nothing in this world can satisfy this deep longing in me for righteousness. I want to make this point just a bit further.

I'm answering the question still, in case you lost me. Why did Jesus not say hunger and thirst for God? Why this righteousness theme here in verse 6 of Matthew 5?

[18:01] So let me show you just a little bit further by showing you a little bit about the structure of Jesus' blessed declarations, these beatitudes that we see. So look, if you will, Matthew 5.

There are eight declarations of blessing. We've got one per verse through verse 10. Excuse me, verse 10. And then we understand verse 11, although he does say at the beginning of it, blessed once again, but to see it as a further explanation of verse 10, the declaration of blessing found in verse 10.

So there are eight total. And they are grouped into two sets of four. Before we talk about those two sets of four, though, I want to show you that the very first beatitude begins with the kingdom of heaven, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And the last one, just before the further explanation of it, in verse 10, Jesus says the same, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

So we have this book ending of the Beatitudes with this idea of citizenship in the kingdom. John Piper referred to this as a kingdom of heaven sandwich, which really made me laugh at the time, and now that I'm reading it, it's not that funny, but he talked about the meat in between, I guess.

[19:27] But anyway, I chuckled and I wrote it down. So now, when we look at these two groupings of four, the first four are passive, if you'll allow the word.

They're happening within. They're attitudes of heart. They're understanding of condition. They're not retaliatory in the case of meekness.

It's happening within. It's who we are. And then the second four are active. They're evidencing of who we are.

So verse six, where we are today, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, ends these first four, this grouping of these first four.

We're hungering for it. We're lacking it. We want it. We want it to be ours. We want to be filled with righteousness. righteousness. And then at the end of the second grouping of four, we see the result of having been filled.

[20:35] Blessed are those who are persecuted. For what? For righteousness' sake. So they are now expressing righteousness and people are seeing righteousness in God's citizens of his kingdom.

And because of that, they are persecuted. So the first four beatitudes describe the broken, grieving, quiet person who hungers and thirsts, wants to be filled with righteousness.

And the next four beatitudes describe the merciful, pure peacemaker who is persecuted because of this righteousness.

So, whole person righteousness, both inward and outward, right? He's expressing what the citizens look like under the lordship of their king, Jesus Christ.

I'm going to show you a bit more about righteousness and what this is going to look like and express in our lives. And to do that, I want you to turn to Psalm 1.

[22:02] This is our public scripture reading from last Lord's Day. very interestingly, the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, I'm going to talk a little bit more about what the Septuagint is in just a second.

The Septuagint translates the Hebrew word into Greek. I'm not going to tell you the Greek word. It's not important. I probably won't pronounce it all that well anyway, but it's the same in the Greek translation of the Old Testament as it is here in Matthew chapter 5, the same Greek word.

Now, as a bit of an aside, because I know that I throw the word Septuagint out. If you're reading well, you're going to see this particular piece of literature referenced.

Septuagint is our Anglicanized word of Latin, of course. You should study Latin. of the longer title, Versio Septuaginta Interpretum.

I think I said that right, which means translation of the 70 interpreters. So, the translation of the 70 and its abbreviation the LXX.

[23:18] So, you're reading a book and you see LXX, that's the Roman numeral for 70, right? is derived, this title is derived from a legend that 72 Jewish scholars, that's six from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, worked independently to translate the whole of the Old Testament into Greek and ultimately produced identical versions.

I don't buy into this legend at all. I don't believe that the Septuagint is inspired. However, it's useful, right? So, more likely, we don't know exactly the dates, but the work of translating into Greek began in the 3rd century B.C.

and was completed in 132 B.C. So, it was a work done across a bunch of time, more likely. But the way it's helpful to us, right, not being speakers of Hebrew or of Koine Greek and we're trying to take our English minds and get them connected to this very, very ancient text is that men who are much closer to the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament who were also Greek speakers, helped us. What did they understand the word to mean? Like, how did they read Psalm 1, blessed is the man? And they brought it over into this Greek word that is inspired in Matthew chapter 5.

Are you connecting with me? I hope that you are. I haven't lost you completely. It's helpful for us in drawing connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament simply as the minds of the readers help us understand the original language.

[24:59] Ask me more questions later if I've lost you entirely. It's helpful. So if you hear people refer to the Septuagint or to the LXX, this is what they're talking about as we look at these words.

So, Psalm 1, the very first word in the Greek version of the Old Testament is the same as the word in Matthew chapter 5 verse 6.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

[26:07] So you can see here this man, this flourishing man and we can see the way in which he flourishes. Again, a metaphor.

Verse 3, he's like a tree. A tree that's planted by water, has all of the sustenance it needs, does the work that it's supposed to do, that is yielding its fruit at the proper time.

its leaf never dries up, it's always productive. And we see the contradiction to that, the wicked who are like a byproduct of the harvest that's no good for anything and the wind simply blows it away.

And so there's a way of the wicked and there's a way of the righteous. righteous and the man who walks in the way of the righteous is declared blessed.

This kind of living is a great work of God on our behalf. Beloved, this is not a thing we do ourselves. Just like poverty of spirit is not a thing that we produce ourselves or deep sadness over our sin and the sin of the world is not a thing we produce in ourselves and meekness is not a thing that's accomplished by ourselves.

[27:31] In the same way, this type of hungering and thirsting to walk in the ways of God is a great work of God. John 15 verse 5 about in the middle of what we call the upper room discourse Jesus said I am the vine you are the branches whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing.

And just before this in the very same discourse in chapter 14 verses 15 through 17 Jesus said to his disciples if you love me you will keep my commandments and I will ask the father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. And when we read that John 14 verse 15 and following in light of John 15 5 I think it's right to restructure it a bit to hear Jesus saying if you love me I've given you the helper in fact the fact that you love me is a sign that I've given you the helper and he will help you to keep my commandments and it's these people I hope it's you people I praise God that it's me that hunger and thirst for righteousness that have this declaration spoken over us of blessed Jesus says we're the ones that are flourishing that are doing well in the place that we live and will forever why are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness declared a blessing right because they shall be satisfied and this statement by

Jesus has both present and future implication those of us who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied in three ways first and all of these are from the book of Philippians if you want to go there I'll read carefully to you we will be satisfied in three ways first we are found righteous in Jesus Christ those of us who are citizens of God's kingdom finding in us working this longing to be righteous before God are found righteous in Jesus Christ we have been declared righteous there is a status of being righteous Philippians chapter 3 verse 9 Paul says not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteousness from God that depends on faith and so in Jesus coming to earth incarnate becoming a man fully taking on being 100% man while also being 100%

God he came and he lived a perfect life he kept the law in every possible sense no one else has ever done this right except the God man Jesus Christ and so righteousness was his and by faith in him that righteousness is credited to our account so we positionally stand before God as righteous as those who hunger and thirst for it right we're satisfied because we have it in Christ in this declarative sense we've been justified before God he has looked at us and said righteous secondly the second way is that we will be increasing in righteousness the day to day practice of obedience to God the declaration is waving over us as a banner and yet we're still meant to be turned out in appreciation for what

[32:10] Christ has done for us in the pursuit of holiness Paul writes again in Philippians chapter 2 verses 12 and 13 I'm actually working backwards through the book he says therefore my beloved as you have always obeyed so now not only as in my presence but much more in my absence work out your own salvation with fear and trembling now what he's saying here is not work for your salvation but evidence your salvation right be about the work of one who is saved one who is a citizen of the kingdom don't delude yourself and think that you can live however you want to those who have been saved by God who have been drawn into his kingdom who have been declared citizens are so glad to live in this place to be citizens of the kingdom of heaven and therefore serve the king so work out your salvation with fear you can say with awe and with trembling verse 13 for it is

God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure so this is the process of sanctification we've been justified we are being sanctified biblical sanctification is often called progressive sanctification we're getting a little bit better one degree of glory to the next as we work and God works in us for his good pleasure and so you want this to be true of you you want to not only say hunger and thirst for righteousness but evidence your hunger and thirst for righteousness by doing good works by being obedient by pursuing righteousness by in the temporal sense being filled with righteousness righteousness and then thirdly third way we'll be satisfied as we will one day be completely righteous

Philippians chapter 1 verse 6 Paul writes to the Philippian church and I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ so the day will come when Christ will return or will go home to be with him whoever comes first and will set aside the burden of his bodies of death our having been delivered from sin still our sinful inclinations and we will have no choice but to live rightly before God for forever all of our living will be given in worship to him and while we await that glorious day we'll be set free from the hindrances of our flesh and

we'll experience the full devotion to God we will stand confident before him in the accomplished righteousness of Jesus Christ and work to become righteous by the power that he works within us we will hunger and thirst for righteousness righteousness the contemporary pastor John Piper I don't think I have to tell you who he is but anyway said this in a sermon on this text which I appreciated he said the great tales of the future will be written about real men and women who are passionately committed to one thing the righteousness of God Jesus speaks to us today blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied join me in prayer