

## The King and His Kingdom Part 6

Matthew 5:6 March 4-5, 2017

### Introduction

- In November of 1917, in the heart of World War 1, PP the Egyptian Expeditionary Force of the British was pursuing the Ottoman Turks as they retreated across the deserts of Palestine. As the EEF pursued the Turkish army across the desert near Beersheba they got ahead of their supply train, including the camels that they depended upon for water.
- As the water ran out, the soldiers of the EEF began to experience extreme dehydration. Their mouths dried out, their heads pounded, and they grew dizzy and faint. As the trek across the desert turned into days, lips began to turn purple and swell and mirages became common among the men.
- Eventually, the soldiers began to die of thirst and they knew that if they did not reach water by nightfall, their entire force would die in the desert. Unfortunately for them, the closest water source was located at the wells of Sheriah, and that was exactly where the Turkish army had retreated to and fortified within.
- Today, in part 6 of our sermon series the King and His Kingdom, we're going to look at the 4<sup>th</sup> beatitude found in PP **Matthew 5:6** "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."
- As you turn in your bibles to **Matthew 5**, I'm going to pray.
- Now, I'm going to lay my cards out on the table right up front for you: when it comes to discipleship, I believe this is the most important of all the beatitudes. If we want to understand discipleship under Christ, we must understand this Beatitude above all else. Remember that this sermon is simply the master teacher, Jesus, giving His yoke, his teaching, to his disciples.
- And in the beatitudes Jesus is explaining the transformation that His disciples undergo through the power of the Holy Spirit when they submit to follow Him as their master.
  - So the sermon on the mount, and the beatitudes in particular, are all about discipleship. And the 4<sup>th</sup> beatitude about hungering and thirsting for righteousness is the epitome of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.
- So today we're going to look at **Matthew 5:6** in terms of the progression of discipleship, the pursuit of discipleship, and the payoff of discipleship. So let's start with the progression of discipleship. PP

### Progression of Discipleship

- The first thing we need to understand is how these beatitudes build upon one another. As we've been learning in this series, each beatitude is a building block for the next. But if we group them into categories we find that the first three beatitudes, dealing with the

poor in spirit, the mourners, and the meek, are all addressing the process of emptying that every disciple of Christ must go through.

- You see, in poverty of Spirit we are emptied of our inclination to self-justification, in mourning over our sin we are emptied of our desire for self-satisfaction, and in meekness we are emptied of our craving for self-serving and self-promotion through our own power, as we instead submit to God.
- So the first three Beatitudes are all about emptying of self. **PP** But then we come to **Matthew 5:6** and there's a turn. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."
  - There's no emptying here. Instead, there's filling and satisfaction. You see, the progression of discipleship to Christ involves being emptied, so that we can then be filled. But the progression doesn't end there. The final four Beatitudes all describe what happens outwardly when we're hungering and thirsting after God: we'll learn to be merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, who face persecution for our focus on righteousness. And we'll break those four down over the next month.
- So **PP** the Beatitudes involve emptying, then filling, and ultimately pouring out. But the emptying is purposeless and the pouring out can't happen without the central beatitude that focuses on being satisfied by God's righteousness.
  - You see, while we must *discover* the depths of our need for God, we mustn't be *paralyzed* by our sense of need. As we turn from ourselves, we should be turning more fervently to God and finding satisfaction. As we do that, we'll find that we're so filled that we can overflow with love towards others, just like Jesus. This is the progression of the beatitudes and this is the progression of discipleship.
- **D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, PP** said "This Beatitude ... is a statement to which all the others lead. It is the logical conclusion to which they come, and it is something for which we should all be profoundly thankful and grateful to God. I do not know of a better test that anyone can apply to himself or herself in this whole matter of the Christian profession than a verse like this. If this verse is to you one of the most blessed statements of the whole of scripture, you can be quite certain you are a Christian. If it is not, then you had better examine the foundations again."
- Why is this such a central statement to what it means to follow Christ? Well, the key lies in understanding what it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness, or put differently, what it means to passionately pursue discipleship under Christ. So let's now turn to the pursuit of discipleship. **PP**

### Pursuit of Discipleship

- Let's begin by looking at what it means to hunger and thirst (Gk. *peinaō* & *dipsaō*).

- Most of us don't know what it truly means to be hungry or thirsty. The Greek here describes a state of hungering and thirsting as if your life depended on it.
- And dying from starvation or lack of water was a very real danger in the ancient world, especially in the arid land of Israel. We have water faucets and grocery stores and even soup kitchens to keep us well-watered and well-fed here in this country. While that's fortunate for our well-being, that's unfortunate for our understanding of what it really means to long for God as if our lives depended on it.
- Now some of you know that I wrestled from middle school up through college. And wrestlers are required to be at a certain weight class. If you don't hit your weight, you can't wrestle. Of course, you'd try to get as lean as was healthy in order to wrestle opponents who were not as strong as you, so most competitive wrestlers are constantly watching their weight and managing their food and water consumption.
  - This meant many weeks of working out and either eating very sparingly or not eating at all. I mean, if you had a grapefruit and a rice cake with peanut butter in a day you had a feast.
  - Now some of you also know that the wrestling season covers both Thanksgiving and Christmas. And if your celebrations for those holidays are anything like my family, you have delicious food everywhere. Delicious food that I could never eat because it was in the middle of wrestling season.
  - Man, did I hunger for that food. I mean, my whole body craved it. And I couldn't have it. I would just go up to the turkey, stuffing, and all the other fixings and sniff it hoping to somehow be filled by the delicious smell of it all. Of course my family was extremely understanding of the whole situation (sarcasm); my father would slowly eat his food right in front of me, making sure to exclaim how delicious everything was and asking me if I wanted any. I really hated my dad.
- Those years of longing for the special Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners maybe just barely allowed me to experience the all-encompassing type of hungering and thirsting described in this passage. **PP** To hunger and to thirst in this passage means to be completely consumed by the object of your desire; so much so that you will literally perish if the all-consuming need isn't met.
  - **Psalm 63:1 PP** "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." (see also **Psalm 42:1-2**)
- But what is the object of that consuming desire supposed to be? The answer, Jesus says, is righteousness.

- The passionate pursuit of the disciple of Christ is the passionate pursuit of righteousness.
- Now, if you're anything like me you're thinking to yourself right about now, 'ok great, righteousness, that's one of those nice church words that gets thrown around a lot.' And it does, because the bible uses that word a lot. So what does it mean?
- Well, there are really three layers of meaning to what righteousness (Gk. *dikaiosynē*) is in this verse, each one proceeds from the other, and it's important that we know all three because as disciples we are called to passionately pursue all three.
  - The first layer of meaning, **PP** and the foundational layer of meaning, is to be in right standing before God. And this only comes through submission to Jesus Christ.
  - Scripture says that Jesus Christ is our righteousness (**1 Cor. 1:30**) and that through faith in Christ we receive right standing with God the Father (**2 Cor. 5:21**) because of the fact that Jesus Christ bore the punishment for our sin on the cross and overcame the punishment of sin and death and rose again to life.
  - Jesus Christ is righteousness and we're blessed when we passionately pursue Christ with a hunger and a thirst that overwhelms every other desire.
    - And this is why this Beatitude, more than any other, has discipleship fully in view. We're to passionately pursue Jesus with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And pursuing Jesus and submitting to Him means being His disciple.
  - And as we go through the process of submitting to Christ, we'll desire more and more to be like Christ. And this is the second layer **PP** of meaning for righteousness, and really the meaning that is most centrally implied in this passage. Righteousness not only means right standing before God, it also means living rightly before our God.
    - As we've been learning through this series, every rabbi expected his disciples to imitate him and be like him in every possible way. Jesus is no different. He desires that His disciples – which includes every submitted follower of Jesus – passionately pursues being like Him in every way.
    - Jesus tells us here that we shouldn't just pursue *Him*, but we should pursue being *like* Him. And when we pursue a lifestyle of righteous living, that's going to get people's attention.
      - This is why Jesus says in a couple of verses that when we live righteously we will be persecuted (**v10**), because a righteous lifestyle will fly in the face of the lifestyle the world says we should live.
      - And later Jesus says that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (**v20**) if we want to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites who were only concerned with the letter of the law.

- So hungering and thirsting for righteousness not only entails passionately pursuing Jesus to have right standing before God, but it also entails seeking to be like Jesus and living rightly before God.
  - But finally, **PP** righteousness also means the justice of God. It means passionately pursuing justice for the glory of God and the furthering of the gospel. Of course, justice that doesn't flow from a desire to be like Christ and to proclaim Christ is empty. But justice that flows from those previous layers of righteousness is to be passionately pursued.
- So we've got to see that righteousness is all three of these things, and in this passage especially means passionately seeking to live like our rabbi in every way.
- So a paraphrase of this beatitude could go something like this: **PP** Blessed are those who passionately pursue submission to Jesus, being like Him in every way, and seeing His justice go forth for the glory of God, as if their life depended upon it.
  - And you want to know what was terribly convicting this week? I know I'm not always doing that.
  - But do you want to know what was overwhelmingly comforting this week? Jesus knows and understands my shortcomings and He's helping me, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to become more like Him and even to *want* to become more like Him every day. Thank God for His grace and mercy in our lives!
    - I don't know about you but I'm extremely thankful that I don't have to do this on my own strength. And as I grow in my knowledge and understanding of God's love for me, He helps me to love Him and passionately desire to seek Him and be like Him more and more.
    - So don't become discouraged if you don't hunger and thirst after God as much as you'd like to. Just ask Him to help you to hunger and thirst for it and I guarantee you that He will. He will allow you to taste and see that the Lord is good, as the Psalmist writes (**Psalm 34:8**).
    - The Lord desires that we should passionately pursue Him as His disciples, and He'll help us to do so.
- **Neil Cole – PP** "Ultimately each church will be evaluated by only one thing. Its disciples. Your church is only as good as its disciples. It does not matter how good your praise, preaching, programs, or property are: If your disciples are passive, needy, consumerist, and not moving in the direction of radical obedience, your church is not good."

- I've been called to spur us on to radical obedience to our savior and King. That radical obedience is called discipleship. That's what this Beatitude is all about and that's what God will bless. And so I want to put forth 4 things we learn about discipleship from this Beatitude that we can ask the Lord to help us with as we passionately seek to be like Him.
  - 1) **PP** Discipleship is not an option, it is a necessity.
    - If you don't have food and water, you will die.
    - Righteousness is the necessity of the spiritual life. Just as we cannot physically survive without food and water, so we cannot spiritually survive without righteousness. And so if we are not seeking after Christ as if our life depends on it we will die spiritually as we are suffocated by the comforts, pleasures, lies, and deceptions of this world.
  - 2) **PP** Discipleship is not for the uncommitted.
    - God's grace is not cheap grace. Being a Christian doesn't mean that you have a get out of hell free card; that all I have to do is believe in Jesus and I can go on living like I want. No, passionately pursuing Jesus means learning to become more and more like Him through radical obedience to our Master and King.
    - **Dallas Willard: PP "the assumption today is that we can be 'Christians' forever and never become disciples."**
    - But the reality is that if you aren't seeking to be a better disciple of Jesus you are not a Christian. And I don't want to see any of us separated from God. And neither does Jesus. This is why He's teaching us this. So that we can learn to submit to Him more fully as His passionate disciples.
  - 3) **PP** Discipleship is not for the full, it is for the empty.
    - **Luke 6:21, 25 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. ...Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry..."**
    - The biggest hindrance to hungry pursuit of Jesus is the fleeting satisfaction we get with other things. You know what I'm talking about right? I don't need to explain all the things that the world tries to entice us with.
    - But you want to know why the Lord often leads us through dry, bleak places? It's to teach us to hunger and thirst for Him alone, to desire to be like Him alone and to push aside the distractions of the world that keep us from pursuing God.
  - 4) **PP** Discipleship is an ongoing process
    - No one becomes a Christian and perfectly hungers and thirsts for God.
    - In fact, hungering and thirsting here in the Greek are ongoing activities (continuous tense, present participle); we are to never stop hungering and

thirsting for more of God's righteousness. There is always more of God that we can experience and that we can become more like.

- As we grow as disciples of Jesus and learn to hunger and thirst after Him more deeply we will find ourselves doing things like practicing the spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, reading and memorizing scripture, worshipping the Lord unhindered, etc.), engaging in more spiritual service inside and outside the church, growing in our knowledge and understanding of spiritual truth, deepening our desire for spiritual things, achieving more spiritual victory over the temptations of the world, and learning to walk with spiritual eyes through the trials and storms of this life.
- These are all marks that we're moving in the right direction as we pursue radical discipleship. And now in the final section, **PP** we see that there is a beautiful payoff for the one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness.

### **Payoff of Discipleship**

- Jesus says we will be satisfied. Satisfied (Gk. *chortazō*) – used in the Greek to describe the fattening of animals for eating/sacrifice
  - It means **PP** to be so filled and overstuffed that what fills you virtually pours out of you. The interesting thing is that this satisfaction leaves us with a continual desiring for more. And this longing doesn't mean that we're not satisfied, it simply means that we can't get enough of what does satisfy us.
- Do we have any sushi eaters here? My dad is a meat and potatoes kind of guy, so I had never even seen sushi until I got to college. And then when I got there, it was the food that all the cool, hipster kids would eat. So out principle I refused to eat any of it.
- But then one day a friend of mine, who I trusted, let me try of piece of his salmon roll dipped in a little soy sauce with just a hint of wasabi. And you know what, I liked it. It popped with flavor, it was like giving my taste buds a revelation of the truth they had been missing out on. My taste buds had never been so satisfied before, and so they were hungry for more.
- Since then, I have tried many kinds of sushi and I don't typically use soy sauce and wasabi anymore, because I don't want to adulterate the pure taste of the sushi (i.e manna from heaven). The more sushi I've had, the more I enjoy it, and the more of it that I desire.
- And you know what, I think righteousness is just like sushi. The more we experience it, the more the Lord will satisfy us with Himself as we see Him working in us and through us and the more we'll desire to see deeper levels of righteousness in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God.
  - Our job is to fervently seek righteousness. His job is to satisfy.



- **John 6:35 PP** “Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”
- **John 4:13-14** “Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.””

## Conclusion

- And this brings us back to the EEF dying of thirst in the desert. **PP** Even though the allied soldiers were exhausted, dehydrated, and fighting against a fortified enemy, they fought through everything, pushed the Ottomans out of Sheriah, and captured the life-giving wells. And for four hours man after man drunk his fill from the waters of the well, satisfying their thirst and refreshing them all for the next battle.
- This fervent seeking after living water is exactly what the Lord blesses in us when we desperately seek after righteousness. No matter the obstacle, no matter the difficulty, no matter the pushback from the enemy, we must ask the Lord to well up within us an overwhelming desire for Him and for lives that increasingly look more and more like His.
- The beautiful thing is that righteousness isn’t something that we have to win or earn on our own. Christ has already won the battle for us, and He’s inviting us to drink deeply from the well. Christ is freely offering the grace to live righteous lives just like my dad dangled the turkey in front of my face during wrestling season. We have the freedom and the grace to seize that righteousness and be satisfied.
- Let’s ask the Holy Spirit to empty us of ourselves and then fill us with a hunger and thirst for righteousness that we receive satisfaction over and over as we’re transformed into radical disciples of our Master and King who pour out God’s love to all those around us. Amen. Amen.