

Happy Are the Hungry

Scripture: Matthew 5:6

Code: 2201

INTRODUCTION

The blessedness the Lord offers in Matthew 5:3-12 can be known only by becoming a part of His kingdom. Christ's words express the conditions for entering His Kingdom and the ongoing characteristics of those who dwell in it: you must be poor in spirit (v. 3), mourn over your sin (v. 4), and be meek (v. 5). To enter the kingdom you must also hunger and thirst after righteousness--perpetual appetites that are found in every kingdom citizen (v. 6).

Matthew 5:6 says, "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." That Beatitude speaks of strong desire and ambition. There are many things people strive for. Ambition is a word that can be used in either a positive or negative sense.

A. Negative Ambition

1. Lucifer

Lucifer was God's most glorious creation. However he had a prideful ambition. Isaiah 14:13-14 says of him, "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High." Lucifer's ambition was to be like God--he was hungry for power. God's response to him was, "Thou shalt be brought down to sheol, to the sides of the pit" (v. 15).

2. Nebuchadnezzar

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon, the greatest of all the world's empires. He ruled over a vast number of people and was one of the most powerful kings who ever lived. Daniel 4:30 says, "The king spoke, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Nebuchadnezzar was hungry for praise. He praised himself and God chastened him: "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; they shall make thee to eat grass like oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (vv. 31-32).

3. The Rich Fool

In Luke 12:17-19 the fool says to himself, "What shall I do, because I have no place to bestow my crops? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease. Eat, drink, and be merry." The rich fool didn't want to share his plentiful harvest with others. He was hungry for his possessions. God said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (v. 20). Lucifer, Nebuchadnezzar, and the man in Luke 12 were all hungry for the wrong things. Their ambition was improperly directed.

B. Positive Ambition

In Matthew 5:6 Jesus says, "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." Just as food and water are physical necessities, righteousness is a spiritual necessity. It isn't wrong to hunger or thirst physically--those are normal desires. The same is true in the spiritual

realm. In Matthew 5:6 Jesus is saying, "Anyone coming into My Kingdom has as great an appetite for righteousness as he does for food and water."

Feed the Body But Starve the Soul?

Unsaved people have ambitions. They hunger and thirst for happiness but they search for it in the wrong places.

Peter compares the unsaved to a dog who licks up his own vomit and to a pig that wallows in mire (2 Pet. 2:22). When the prodigal son needed food he was eating hog food (Luke 15:16). Man seeks "that which is not bread" (Isa. 55:2)--he doesn't seek the bread of life. Jesus offered Himself as that bread (John 6:35). He knew the hunger and thirst of men and women. The heart of every person in the world--believer or unbeliever--was created with a hunger for God.

In Jeremiah 2:13 God says, "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." God made man with a thirst for Him but man refuses the well of living water. It's sad to see people attempting to met their hunger and thirst with the wrong things. They need fulfillment and meaning in life but seek to fill themselves with worldly pleasures, possessions, power, and praise.

The prodigal son thought pleasure, possessions, and popularity would fulfill his needs. But his soul was still hungry and he finally had the sense to say to himself, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" (Luke 15:17). He returned to his father's house and was given a feast (a picture of salvation). The world's "food" of riotous living tries to meet the soul's hunger with the pleasures of sin but send it away starving. Those who respond to the Spirit of God come running to the Father and are given a feast that fills the hungry soul. First John 2:15-16 says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world [such as] the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

As we study Matthew 5:6 you need to ask yourself, What am I hungry for? Do I seek power, praise, possessions, or pleasure? Am I feeding myself on the husks that swine eat (Luke 15:16)? Am I like the dog who licks his vomit or the pig that wallows in mire (2 Pet. 2:22)? Or am feeding at the real source of happiness? The answer you give will indicate whether you are in Christ's kingdom or not.

LESSON

I. HOW DOES THIS BEATITUDE FIT IN WITH THE OTHERS?

A. It Is Part of a Progression of Thought

The first Beatitude says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). He who is poor in spirit recognizes he is devoid of righteousness. In God's eyes what seem to be human advantages are in fact nothing. Apart for Christ every man and woman is hopeless and sinful. Matthew 5:4 says, "Blessed are they that mourn." He who is poor in spirit sorrows over his moral bankruptcy. Jesus then said, "Blessed are the meek" (v. 5). He who understands his sinful nature and mourns over it is meek before God. In comparison to God, sinful man recognizes he is nothing. That meekness recognizes that man's internal spiritual hunger can be satisfied only from God's table.

The progression of the Beatitudes is simple. Commentator Martyn Lloyd-Jones said of Matthew 5:6, "This Beatitude again follows logically from the previous ones; it 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" (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], pp. 73- 74).

Our society chases after all the wrong things: money, possessions, fame, and pleasure. The United States Declaration of Independence says the right to pursue happiness is unalienable, but most people can't find happiness because they look for it in the wrong place.

B. It Is Part of God's Promises

A promise accompanies each Beatitude: "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (v. 3); "they shall be comforted" (v. 4); "they shall inherit the earth" (v. 5); and "they shall be filled" (v. 6). The world is working like mad to gain material things, yet if people would come into God's kingdom on His terms they would ultimately gain all.

The Jewish people at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry worked hard to bring the kingdom to earth. They wanted to inherit the earth and were trying to fill their empty lives with meaning. However they were looking for the wrong things. What the Lord Jesus promised He offered as a gift.

C. It Logically Follows Meekness

I think the key to receiving God's promises is meekness. Those who are meek are broken over their sin and seek what God has promised. In every example of meekness in the Bible the underlying motive was that the person knew God's promises.

1. The example of Abraham

When Abraham and Lot divided the land they were living in Abraham told Lot, "Is not the whole land before thee?... if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Gen. 13:9). Abraham demonstrated meekness, but it was based on his knowledge that God had promised him all the land anyway (Gen. 12:7). He didn't care if Lot had some of it temporarily. The meek person knows that in the end God will give him everything.

2. The example of David

When David had the opportunity to kill King Saul, his enemy, he didn't (1 Sam. 24:3-7). Instead he cut a corner off of Saul's robe. David knew God had anointed him to become king of Israel. He could wait on the Lord's timing because he knew God would fulfill His promise. Once we believe God's promises we stop trying to fulfill them on our own. Since God said we will inherit the earth, there is no need to spend our lives trying to get it. We shouldn't mind others borrowing it for awhile.

3. The example of Christ

In Matthew 5:40-42 Jesus says, "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." We aren't to hang onto the things of this world. It will all be ours someday so we are to share it. That kind of spirit produces the right kind of ambition. A person ambitious for the righteousness of God will inherit everything else too.

4. The example of Paul

The apostle Paul said, "All [things] are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:22-23). The Jewish people of Christ's time wanted to rule the earth and be comforted in the midst of bad political and social circumstances. They were working furiously to attain happiness. But our Lord told them they would be given what they sought only if they came on His terms. In Matthew 6:33 He says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It's painful to be broken in spirit, mourn over your sin, and meekly die to self. However, Matthew 5:6 holds the promise of comfort: when you hunger and thirst for righteousness you will reach out to God. Then He will give what only He can give.

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HUNGER AND THIRST?

A. A Right Desire

1. It is intense

Both hunger and thirst are intense desires. The concept Christ spoke of in Matthew 5:6 was a more powerful concept in His culture than it is in ours. For the most part we don't know what it really means to hunger or thirst. Most of us have never experienced a drought. We think of hunger as an empty feeling we get when it's 1:00 p.m. and we are used to eating at 12:15 p.m. A book written by Major Vivian Gilbert called *The Romance of the Last Crusade* (N.Y.: D. Appleton & Co., 1927) describes the British liberation of Palestine in World War I. Dr. E.M. Blaiklock related part of it in a

magazine article: "Driving up from Beersheba, a combined force of British, Australians and New Zealanders were pressing on the rear of the Turkish retreat over arid desert. The attack out-distanced its water-carrying camel train. Water bottles were empty. The sun blazed pitilessly out of a sky where the vultures wheeled expectantly." "Our heads ached," writes Gilbert, "and our eyes became bloodshot and dim in the blinding glare.... Our tongues began to swell ... our lips turned a purplish black and burst" Those who dropped out of the column were never seen again, but the desperate force battled on to Sheria. There were wells at Sheria, and had they been unable to take the place by nightfall, thousands were doomed to die of thirst. "We fought that day," writes Gilbert, "as men fight for their lives.... We entered Sheria station on the heels of the retreating Turks. The first objects which met our view were the great stone cisterns full of cold, clear, drinking water. In the still night air the sound of water running into the tanks could be distinctly heard, maddening in its nearness; yet not a man murmured when orders were given for the battalions to fall in, two deep, facing the cisterns." He describes the stern priorities: the wounded, those on guard duty, then company by company. It took four hours before the last man had his drink of water, and in all that time they had been standing 20 feet from a low stone wall, on the other side of which were thousands of gallons of water. "I believe," Major Gilbert concludes, "that we all learned our first real Bible lesson on that march from Beersheba to Sheria wells." Blaiklock added, "If such were our thirst for God, for righteousness, for His will in our life, a consuming, all-embracing, preoccupying desire, how rich in the fruits of the Spirit would we be" ("New Light on Bible Imagery: Water," Eternity [August, 1966], pp. 27-28). The Greek verbs Jesus used are powerful: *peinao* means "to suffer deep hunger," and *dipsao* means "to suffer thirst." Those are the strongest impulses in the natural realm.

2. It is continual

Grammatically Jesus expressed the two Greek verbs as present participles, which imply continuous action. He was speaking of those continuously hungering and thirsting for Christ's righteousness. R.C.H. Lenski said that the hunger and thirst a person has for righteousness "increases in the very act of being satisfied" (The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1964], p. 189). Speaking of that same hunger Luke 6:21 says, "Blessed are ye that hunger now." If you claim a relationship to Christ but you aren't hungering and thirsting for righteousness, you need to honestly question whether you know Him.

C. The Biblical Model

1. Moses' desire

While Moses lived in the wilderness, God called to him from a burning bush (Ex. 3:2-4). When Moses drew near to the bush God said, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (v. 5). Moses saw the Shekinah glory of God in the bush. Later when God led Israel out of Egypt, Moses saw God's hand in the plagues. He saw God at work when the Red Sea parted for the Israelites and when the Egyptian army was destroyed. Moses knew what it was to hunger after God and be filled. After Moses built the Tabernacle according to God's commands and God's glory took residence in it, Moses still wanted to see more of God's glory (Ex. 33:18). One would think he had seen enough! But Moses hungered to see and know more of God and His righteousness. That's what kingdom citizens are like: they can never get enough of God's righteousness.

2. David's desire

David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). He walked in close communion with God. He wrote, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.... Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. 23:1-4). David personally experienced God's protection, care, and guidance. Zeal for God's house had eaten him up (Ps. 69:9). The pain that fell on God fell on him. In Psalm 63 he says, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (v. 1). David's hunger and thirst for God never diminished.

3. Paul's desire

Paul knew the Lord--he had seen personal visions of Christ on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:3-9), in the jail at Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-21), and when he was caught up to the third heaven, where he saw things too wonderful to describe (2 Cor. 12:1-4). He wrote many of the books in the New Testament, penning marvelous expressions of divine truth. It would seem he knew all of God he could ever want to know. Yet his cry in Philippians 3:10 was, "[Oh] that I may know [Christ], and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." Before Paul was converted he had known the righteousness of the law (Phil. 3:6). After his conversion he counted that righteousness as worthless compared to knowing the righteousness of God. In 2 Peter 3:18 we are exhorted to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." J.N. Darby, an early leader of the Plymouth Brethren movement, said, "To be hungry is not enough; I must be really starving to know what is in His heart towards me. When the prodigal son was hungry he went to feed upon husks, but when he was starving, he turned to his father" (quoted in Martyn Lloyd-Jones' *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, vol. 1, p. 81). Only God can satisfy that kind of desperation. Not until people hunger and thirst after righteousness do they seek the fulfillment God can give. Luke 1:53 says, "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." Those who are satisfied with what they have will not seek to be filled by God. They will remain spiritually empty.

The desire for righteousness is a tremendous hunger that knows no end. The psalmist said, "I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). Only when we see Jesus Christ will our hunger and thirst for righteousness be satisfied.

III. WHAT IS IT WE ARE TO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR?

A. Shun Superficial Happiness

Amos said that the people of the world "pant after the dust of the earth" (2:7). People hunger for happiness. One thing that has always amazed me is our society's orientation toward amusement. I'm not against Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, Magic Mountain, and other places like that, but many people think pleasure is the answer to their search for happiness. It's as though they have a painful disease they are happy to put up with as long as they have no pain. A doctor would be considered very bad if he could cure a disease but instead decided just to relieve its pain. Yet that is what so many in the world are like: they ignore the disease and the cure in a headlong rush to find an anesthetic.

Too many in the church today are seeking the same kind of remedy to their problems. Many Christians are searching for happiness through ecstatic experiences. They want a holy high. Some go to seminars or visit counselors with the hope of experiencing spiritual ecstasy. But that isn't what Christians who are in search of happiness are to look for.

B. Seek Spiritual Happiness

Many say, "I'm so miserable. How can I be happy?" Matthew 5:6 says, "[Happy] are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Happiness is a by-product of righteousness. It doesn't come from getting zapped with a holy high. Biblically, righteousness (Gk., *dikaiosune*) or justification means "to be made right with God." The only real happiness of enduring value is being right with God.

1. Salvation

Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness seek salvation. That righteousness is given when a person believes in Christ. At that point he will understand he is a sinner separated from God. He becomes broken in spirit, mournful, and meek. He wants to be restored to a right relationship to God and be forgiven, desiring to be freed from self and sin's power. Righteousness is synonymous with salvation in many Old Testament passages. The prophet Isaiah repeatedly equated the two, noting that righteousness is a gift received at the moment of salvation (Isa. 45:8; 46:12-13; 51:5; 56:1; 61:10). Therefore we can use the word salvation as a substitute for righteousness in Matthew 5:6. It

can thus read, "Happy are those who hunger and thirst after salvation." Those who want to be happy desire salvation--the cleansing that comes through the blood of Christ and the righteousness of Christ applied to all that believe in Him. Only when a man abandons his self-righteousness and hungers for the salvation that comes only from God will he know true happiness. The Jewish people of Christ's time had a problem with giving up their self-righteousness. They thought they would gain salvation by their works. So for Jesus to say they didn't have true righteousness was an unbelievable shock for many. Spiritual happiness belongs only to the holy. If you are unhappy it may be because you are unholy. To Christ's Jewish audience holiness meant conforming to certain rules. It was an entirely external affair. But Christ said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Even those who were externally the most righteous did not meet His standard. The Beatitudes strip away external self-righteousness and force us to look at who we are inside.

2. Sanctification

A person doesn't stop hungering and thirsting for righteousness once he is saved. A true Christian desires to be more and more like Christ. He desires greater purity and will never get to the point in this life where he thinks he has arrived. It is just as revolting to hear unregenerate people say, "We have saved ourselves" as it is to hear professing Christians say, "We have arrived." In Philippians 1:9 Paul says, "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more." No matter how much you love you should love more. No matter how much you pray, obey God, or think like Christ, you should always want to do better (cf. Phil. 3:12-14). Not Some But All Christians don't seek bits and pieces of righteousness. They seek all the righteousness of Christ in their desire to be like Him. The grammatical construction of the Greek text of Matthew 5:6 shows that. In the Greek language verbs like hunger and thirst are normally followed by nouns in the genitive case. In English, genitives are usually expressed by placing the word of before a noun. When a Greek person was hungry he would literally say, "I hunger for of food." That is a partitive genitive--a noun in the genitive case that indicates a person wants part of what is available. He wouldn't say, "I hunger for food" because that would mean he hungered for all the food in the world. Rather he would phrase his statement to mean he wanted enough food to satisfy his need. However in Matthew 5:6 the normal use of the partitive genitive is abandoned. Instead the accusative case is used, which makes the verse read, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after all righteousness." The Christian is never satisfied because no matter how much righteousness he has he doesn't have all that is available. Like David he cries out, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). Also, in Matthew 5:6 the definite article appears in the Greek text before "righteousness." Christians are to desire the righteousness--the righteousness of God. Our hunger and thirst for righteousness begins with salvation and continues in sanctification. Jesus commended those who hunger after righteousness--not those who claim to possess it. Those who heard Christ preach Matthew 5 expected Him to say, "Blessed are those who possess righteousness." But He said, "Blessed are those who want it." It's been well said that such a desire is a thirst no earthly stream can satisfy, a hunger that must feed on Christ or die!

IV. WHAT IS THE RESULT OF DESIRING RIGHTEOUSNESS?

A. Blessing

B. Filling

Jesus said that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness "shall be filled." The Greek word translated "filled" was used of foddering an animal. Here it speaks of being completely satisfied. God will make us happy and satisfied.

From what we have already said, it may seem that a paradox exists: God will satisfy us but we will continue to hunger and thirst. I'm satisfied when I eat the lemon-cream pie my wife makes, but I always want more! The satisfaction one piece provides also increases my desire for more of the same. That is a picture of what righteousness is for the saved--the more we are filled with the rich, sweet taste of Christ's righteousness the more we desire it.

1. James 2:15-16--"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled ... what doth it profit?" The word Greek translated for "filled" speaks of being really filled or stuffed. James was referring to physical food but Jesus was speaking of spiritual food. 2. Psalm 107:9--"For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." 3. Psalm 34:10--"They who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." 4. Psalm 23:1-5--"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.... [My] cup runneth over." 5. Jeremiah 31:14--"My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord." 6. John 4:14--Jesus said to a Samaritan woman, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." 7. John 6:35--Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger." Christ brings satisfaction. Yet believers also have a blessed dissatisfaction that desires more of His righteousness. A person who belongs to God's kingdom has a consuming desire not for power, praise, or possessions, but for righteousness.

V. HOW CAN I KNOW IF I'M HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS?

A. Are You Dissatisfied with Yourself?

Thomas Watson said, "He has most need of righteousness that least wants it" (The Beatitudes [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980], p. 124). Do you find yourself saying, "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). Or are you self-righteous, thinking everyone else is wrong and you are right?

If you are in any sense satisfied with yourself you need to question whether you really hunger after righteousness. The pain of constantly falling short of God's standards characterizes those who hunger after righteousness. Believers need to hunger for righteousness as Esau was when he returned from a hunting trip (Gen. 25:32).

B. Does Anything External Satisfy You?

Do external things influence the way you feel? Do things seem to be better in your life when you buy something new? A hungry man will never be satisfied with flowers, music, or an encouraging speech--he will still want food. A thirsty man will not be satisfied unless he is given a drink. A hunger for righteousness cannot be satisfied with anything but the righteousness of Christ.

C. Do You Have a Great Appetite for God's Word?

Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them" (Jer. 15:16). If you hunger and thirst after righteousness you will devour God's Word. The hungry do not need to be told to eat. Believers shouldn't have to be told to read and study their Bibles. If you have no desire to learn what Scripture says about increasing in righteousness, you are not functioning as a child of the kingdom should. Either you are being sinful or you aren't a kingdom child.

D. Are the Things of God Sweet to You?

Proverbs 27:7 says, "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." You can tell if a person truly seeks righteousness when God brings devastation into his life. The hungry soul is still content despite the pain he is going through. Those who rejoice only when good things happen and react with resentment when things get rough do not hunger and thirst after righteousness--they are chasing after superficial happiness. Thomas Watson said that the person who desires righteousness "can feed upon the myrrh of the gospel as well as the honey" (The Beatitudes, p. 128). Some know what it's like to be reproved by God or suffer greatly--they have experienced severe trials, pain, and anxiety. However I can tell you from personal experience that everything is still sweet in the midst of such circumstances. Everything is sweet to the hungry soul because God is making that person more and more righteous.

E. Are Your Hunger and Thirst Unconditional?

Matthew 19:16-22 is the account of the rich young ruler who wanted to know how to get into Christ's kingdom. However, his hunger was obviously conditional and he was never filled because he was unwilling to give up his possessions. If you want Christ and your sin or Christ and something else, you aren't hungering and thirsting after righteousness. A hungry man doesn't want food and a new

suit. A thirsty man doesn't want water and a new pair of shoes. Psalm 119:20 says, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thine ordinances at all times."

Conclusion

Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Isaiah said, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early" (26:9). David said, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee" (Ps. 63:1). The wise virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 had oil in their lamps before the bridegroom came. They were prepared because they thirsted.

Sadly, there will be people who thirst for righteousness when it's too late to do so. They will be like the rich man in Luke 16:24 who said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:24). They will thirst when there can be no remedy. Thirst now and be filled.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Christ's words in the Beatitudes express the _____ for entering His Kingdom and the _____ of those who dwell in it .
2. What was Lucifer's ambition? How did God respond to him (Isa. 14:13-15)?
3. What was Nebuchadnezzar hungry for? How did God respond to his desire (Dan. 4:30-32)?
4. What did the rich fool of Luke 12:17-19 want to do? What was he hungry for?
5. How does Christ illustrate the necessity of righteousness in Matthew 5:6?
6. Where do unsaved people look for happiness? Explain.
7. What do you need to ask yourself when you when you study Matthew 5:6?
8. Explain the progression of thought in Matthew 5:3-6.
9. What promises have been made to believers in the Beatitudes we have studied so far?
10. Why could Abraham and David be confident enough to be meek?
11. What are we exhorted to do in Matthew 6:33? What will be the result if we do that?
12. Why is it significant that Jesus used present participles for expressing hunger and thirst?
13. Give examples of people in the Bible who had a continual thirst for God. Explain how they showed their thirst.
14. What happens to people who are satisfied with what they have (Luke 1:53)?
15. When will the believer's desire for righteousness be fully satisfied?
16. What do many people think is the answer to their search for happiness? What's wrong with that approach?
17. What does the word righteousness mean? When does a person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness first receive it?
18. What is righteousness synonymous with? Explain.
19. To whom does happiness belong? If you are unhappy what is likely to be the reason?
20. How is the meaning of Matthew 5:6 affected by the fact that the partitive genitive is not used in that verse?
21. What does the Greek word translated "filled" in Matthew 5:6 speak of (see p. 12)?
22. Explain the apparent paradox in Matthew 5:6.
23. How does a person who hungers after righteousness respond when God brings devastation into his life?

Pondering the Principles

1. How severe is man's need for righteousness? In many churches today it is said that all men and women are good-- some more than others--and need only the opportunity to show it. The idea is that somehow we are all Christians at heart. Vance Havner said, "We have too many casual Christians

who dabble in everything but are not committed to anything. They have a nodding acquaintance with a score of subjects but are sold on nothing. 'Of course I'm interested in church--but with my club and my lodge and my golf and my bridge and my stamp collecting and my ceramics and my African violets, I just can't get too excited about religion.' Our Lord had no place in His program for casual disciples. It was all or nothing" (Pepper 'n' Salt [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966], p. 29). Man's need for Christ's righteousness is not to awaken him from a slight slumber-- it's to raise him up from the dead. A person who truly hungers and thirsts for righteousness realizes he is dealing with a life-or-death issue--not an interesting activity to be squeezed into an already busy schedule. Do you hunger and thirst like that?

2. Since hungering and thirsting for righteousness is the essence of a Christian, what place does sin have in a believer's life? Writer Jerry Bridges made this discovery while studying 1 John 2, "I realized that my personal life's objective regarding holiness was less than that of [the apostle] John's. He was saying, in effect, 'Make it your aim not to sin.' As I thought about this, I realized that deep within my heart my real aim was not to sin very much.... Can you imagine a soldier going into battle with the aim of 'not getting hit very much'? The very suggestion is ridiculous. His aim is not to get hit at all! Yet if we have not made a commitment to holiness without exception, we are like a soldier going into battle with the aim of not getting hit very much. We can be sure if that is our aim, we will be hit--not with bullets, but with temptation over and over again" (The Pursuit of Holiness [Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1978], p. 96). Arm yourself with righteousness and diligently avoid sin.

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