
"Jesus' Take on Happiness, Part 3"
(Matthew 5:1-12)
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Introduction:

Matthew 5:1-12 TNIV

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

He said:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

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

⁷ **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.**

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Let's take a quick inventory of the heart, shall we? We'll begin by asking a question and you respond with the first image or idea or concept that comes to mind. Now you don't have to say it out loud, but in your mind, think of the answer to this survey. Here's the question, "**At this moment in your life, what is your heart's desire?**" Let me give you a few moments to think about and answer that question. Okay, time's up. It's a loaded question that tells you a lot about who you are. The answer to that question may reveal hidden pains and unmet needs. It may reveal what you value. It may give clues to your personal philosophy on life.

Some of you may have answered that question like this.

--I just want to be happy.

--I want my life to have purpose and meaning.

--I want to be healed from my sickness.

--I want to be married. Some married people might be saying, "oh to be single again!"

--I want my parents to be proud of me.

Those are hunger and thirst type of things. Those are 'keep-you-up-at-night' type of things. Those are the quiet whispers of the soul. Those are the things we keep within and rarely share with even our closest friends.

Jesus is a person who addresses heart issues. He's the one who cuts through the smokescreen and goes for the jugular. He did it in John 4 with the woman at the well. She wants to talk about water...he goes for the spiritual jugular. She wants to talk about the proper locus of worship and he goes for the spiritual jugular.

He did it again with the rich young ruler who was so self-confident and self-righteous in his own abilities and at the end of their dialogue Jesus cuts where it will hurt this young man most. Go and sell all your possessions and give to the poor because he knew his heart.

Can you and I agree that Jesus, the creator of heaven and earth and human kind, and he himself having been a human, knows intimately the human heart? I believe so. In fact there is no one else who can know the ins and outs, the deepest, darkest, most painful places of the heart and soul than Jesus Christ. And because he has that knowledge he can say the words of the next beatitude.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled (6).

To thoroughly understand this beatitude we'll need to pick it apart and understand each of the key words and concepts and then put it back together to see what Jesus is getting at.

The most important word to understand in this verse is the word *righteousness*. What is righteousness? There are two major definitions used in the bible. For the first one, righteousness carries a legal meaning and this is seen most commonly in Paul's letters. So when a person trusts in Christ by faith, God no longer considers that person guilty, but rather righteous, or not guilty. It carries the same meaning as the word 'justify'.

But that is not what it means here. You can say this passage is the exception to the rule. In this verse *righteousness* has to do with a pattern of life that is conformed to God's will (Carson). So righteousness is a Christ-like lifestyle. It's having certain attitudes. It's having certain motives. It's having a certain type of behavior. It's having a certain set of morals. Another way to look at righteousness is "personal holiness."

And the attitude or appetite you and I have to have with regards to righteousness is to hunger and thirst for it.

Hunger and thirst are life and death words. And to hunger and thirst for righteousness or not to do so are matters of eternal life and death. It's a matter of living the promised fullness of life that Christ spoke to us, or just existing. It's a matter of living for 70 or 80 years now and then going to hell or going heaven and living with God for eternity.

The author of Hebrews (12:14) says that without holiness no one will see the Lord. So this is very important for us to understand and apply to our lives.

Hunger and thirst also imply a sense of utter desperation. We don't consider righteousness as optional. Nor do we think about it as something I'll get around to if I have the time or if I get caught. You and I have must have an utter desperation to be holy. Why?

--Because God is holy and he said for that reason, 'be holy!'

--Because sin grieves God and His Holy Spirit!

--Because you don't want to spit on the cross. As the author of Hebrews (ch 6) says of those who don't care about sin, "they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace."

--Because sin for Christians hinders our intimacy with God.

--Because sin is the destroyer of personal relationships. It's the reason people divorce and children run away from home, and we lie, cheat and steal from one another.

--Because holiness is the true test of one's salvations, because Christians who aren't holy aren't Christians.

Shall I go on?

--Because sin will keep us from being used to our full potential as Christ's servants.

--Because our personal sins will and do affect more than just ourselves. It affects our parenting and marriage, our workplace, our church.

--Because sin advances the kingdom of Satan and not the Kingdom of God.

--Because sin not only causes turmoil of the soul, but can cause physical illness too.

--Because sin prevents you from hearing the voice of God to lead and guide your life.

And there's more.

But that is why you and I must hunger and thirst, as if our lives depended on it, because it does, for righteousness.

How does one do that? How do you and I hunger and thirst for this righteousness? Hunger and thirst are survival instincts, aren't they? You hunger when you're hungry. You thirst when you're thirsty. How do you gain that hunger or thirst?

1. Here is the most important thing you can do. Ask God for it. The bible says we don't receive because we don't ask. And some of us may not have prayed the prayer for holiness in quite some time. We've become too comfortable, too desensitized to sin.

If you've ever taken any biology then you know how certain diseases can become resistant to medicine. At first some bacteria gets killed with penicillin, a bacteria fighting drug. But what happens? That bacteria, every time it's hit with penicillin, it becomes a little more used to the drug. The drug begins to lose some of its effectiveness. And several mutations later, the drug is completely resistant to that drug.

I think we are all like that. We're like this bacteria and along comes some sin, and whoa, at first that stuff is strong and concentrated and it makes a huge impact on us. But dose after dose, the sin begins to lose its effectiveness. So then the devil starts pulling out the heavy artillery. And he bombs you with more graphic images and more obscene language, and more lewd behavior, more callousness and hardness of heart, until finally, those too, begin to have little impact on your heart. Pretty soon you are invincible. No drug is strong enough. No sin is gross enough. It all becomes good. It all becomes acceptable. And it's no longer that bad so your standard of what is right and what is wrong begins to wear away. Believe it or not, that is what happens to us.

But if we get on our knees and cry out for this hunger and thirst for holiness, do you think God will say no? Could there be a prayer that God would be more pleased with than to hear from his son or daughter, "Lord, Father, create in me a yearning for holiness. I want to look at the sin in my life and be filled with loathsome hate toward it, and I want to look at righteousness and be filled with longing and aching. Lord create this appetite in me."

2. Remember the days of spiritual darkness. Remember when God let you sin until you couldn't stand it any more? Like eating sweets to the point of never wanting another bite of chocolate again? Remember the bitter gall of sin. And then remember the sweet honey of forgiveness, the new heart and create God worked in you. Remember that.
3. Read Scripture until it hurts. You know I haven't guilted you about not jumping on board with the bible reading plan or falling behind after Genesis chapter 4. I've been nice and gracious,

offering again and again second and third and fourth chances, very pastoral...but enough is enough. Don't expect to be holy, or even to have a hunger for holiness apart from the bible. It cannot be done. Maybe you're one of those...but what if I don't want to read the bible? What if my desire for scripture is not there? One word. Repent. Repent for your hardness of heart. You need to do a major sackcloth and dust before God. Repent that you were able to go so long w/o the bible. Repent that you thought you could make it a day w/o hearing from God. Repent that you implied that your ways were better than God's ways. Now I know some of you have been pricked in the heart by these words and then you'll walk outside and you'll see that bible reading plan staring you in the face, calling to you, beckoning you to pick it up and slip it in your bible and read. But you'll be too worried about the person who might be watching, thinking that they're pointing their stubby little finger at you, "oohh, there's a bible neglecter, right there!" And you'll ignore the Spirit of God and go on home. Don't be that person!

4. Holiness is funner than sinning. I remember listening to one of Pastor John McArthur's sermons on this subject and he said this. "You thought sinning was fun? Well you should try holiness." Sin's fun man, we wouldn't do it if it wasn't so. Premarital sex is fun. Getting drunk is fun. Living beyond your means is fun. But it's temporary fun. It's narcissistic fun. If you're a real fun freak, then be holy. Can there be anything more pleasurable than to know that your life pleases God? *Like the little child whose being taught by his dad how to ride his bike without his training wheels and you know the drill. You grab the seat and run with him, right? Helping him keep his balance. And then when you run out of breath or when he finally gets the whole balance thing, what do you do? You let go. And there she goes wobbling a whole lot but doing it, riding on two wheels and she turns her head that's in a helmet that's too big, she looks at you and smiles. Because she is not only proud that she's doing it, but that she's pleasing her daddy.* When our lives are lived out in holiness, God is pleased.

And just as we mentioned all the ill-effects of sin, so too when we are holy, God can use us to have a mighty impact. Imagine with me one more time, in the hypothetical...imagine with me these scenarios...

--if you were holy in you dating relationships what kind of impact would that have in you, in your partner, to God?

--if you were holy in your marriage what would that mean for communication, for intimacy, what kind of impact would your marriage make to others?

--if you were holy in the way you did work, what would that mean for your productivity, your work relationships, your attitude toward money, your time management, your identity, your priorities?

--if you were holy in your thought life, when do one else is looking, what would that mean for the way you view women, for the way you view possessions, for the way you think of people you dislike?

Man wouldn't that be so fun? To be holy?

Friends remember the whole of the sermon on the mount is both prescriptive (what we should do) and descriptive (what we are to be) of God's Kingdom citizens, also known as Christians. I'm saying this to tell you that it is not okay for you not to have this longing. It is not okay to think that you can get to it later. Jesus later said in Matthew, if your eye causes you to sin....do what with it? And if your hand causes you to sin....do what with it? He's not messing around.

We gotta want it bad. We gotta ache and yearn and kick and scream for it. Holiness is not an option for Christians. It's mandatory.

If you hunger and thirst for righteousness, you will be filled.

This means that we cannot obtain righteousness on our own strength, we must be filled by God. We know this to be true from Scripture and personal experience. Every benefit, every change in character, every movement upwards in our spiritual climb comes as a result of the grace of God.

So Jesus is saying here, you can't be righteous on your own. It's God's job to make you righteous. Your job is to be hungry and thirsty.

When we start hungering and thirsting and desiring to be righteous more than we want food or drink, more than anything else, then the promise is this. You will be blessed. And the blessing comes in the form of fulfillment. Your hunger and your thirst for righteousness will be satisfied. You will be holy.

Conclusion:

Listen to what 20th century British preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones says this about this beatitude.

"I do not know of a better text that anyone can apply to himself or herself in this whole matter of the Christian profession (life) 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."

Friends, so much is riding on this one beatitude. Let's not take it lightly.