Blessed are Those who Hunger and Thirst

**Matthew 5:6**

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**Introduction:** A study inScientific American found the following:

“Most people believe that they are above average, a statistical impossibility. The [above average effects](http://persweb.wabash.edu/facstaff/hortonr/articles%20for%20class/Dunning%20heath%20and%20suls%20flawed.pdf), as they are called, are common. For example, 93 percent of [drivers](http://heatherlench.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/svenson.pdf) rate themselves as better than the median driver. Of [college professors](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/he.36919771703/abstract), 94 percent say that they do above-average work. People are unrealistically optimistic about their own health risks compared with those of other people. For example, people think that they are less susceptible to the [flu](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1978.tb00783.x/abstract) than others. [Stock pickers](http://128.118.178.162/eps/fin/papers/9803/9803001.pdf) think the stocks they buy are more likely to end up winners than those of the average investor. If you think that self-enhancement biases exist in other people and they do not apply to you, you are not alone. Most people state that they are more likely than others to provide [accurate self-assessments](http://psp.sagepub.com/content/28/3/369.full.pdf).”

A recent study by a Christian research group discovered that Christians are not at all exempt from this human character flaw. 51% chose answers that placed them firmly in the “Pharisee or Self-righteous” category while only 14% were decisively “Christlike” in their attitudes and actions. The rest were a mix of self-righteous attitudes and Christlike actions. 100% felt they were believing and doing “the right things” to please God. Conclusion: The overwhelming majority of humans think of themselves as morally, mentally and motivationally superior to others. For Christians this means they are satisfied with the level of “righteousness” they have attained.

Self-aggrandizement, not surprisingly, began with Lucifer. Created beautiful and given his position in the universe by God, Satan totally over evaluated his own status.

 **Isa. 14:12-14** "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! 13 "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

The same attitude appeared in Nebuchadnezzar (The Head of Gold) as he walked on his palace roof in The greatest Kingdom of the Earth.

**Dan. 4:30-32** "The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' 31 "While the word *was* in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, *saying*, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, 32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place *will be* with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'

In His pivotal sermon on The Kingdom of Heaven and human happiness Jesus says ….

**Matt. 5:6** "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for (The) righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Being hungry implies that you need food and being thirsty suggests your need for water. The blessed or the happy are not satisfied with their level of righteousness before God or mankind, but are hungry to actually possess righteousness. How can you be happy (blessed by God) if you know you are not righteous? Humanly it should be the ones who have obtained righteousness and morality that should be finally …. Happy.

Human beings hunger and thirst for happiness and not for the righteousness that will make them happy. They are by default “content” with who and what they already imagine themselves to be. Consequently they are not on the path leading to The Kingdom of Heaven and they will never obtain the happiness they pursue in life. My own experience confirms this statistic. Most Christians I meet would not describe themselves as “sinners.” Believers have a serious disconnect between what Jesus is about to teach here and what they subconsciously believe about their own lives.

Lord…help us to hear and internalize what Jesus is saying in this fourth beatitude….Amen!

A starving man has exactly one ambition … To find food. The same is true of someone without water. But most humans are perfectly content with their level of righteousness and morality. Most feel superior to those around them and why on earth would they hunger and thirst for something they feel no need for?

The point of this verse is this … Like everything else in this sermon so far, God’s prescription for joy, happiness and contentment runs 180 degrees counter to our human inclinations. The world glitters with the promise of satisfaction but it never, ever delivers. The world is fallen, cursed and unable to meet the deepest desires of our hearts.

**1 Jn. 2:15-17** Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

**Isa. 55:2** "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance.

Happiness is found when we seek to be like God in as many ways as possible. When we hunger to know how God wants us to respond to someone. When we thirst to know God’s thoughts and attitudes toward corrupt governments and evil men. We must know and we must understand! God alone is righteous and that means that His ways are the righteousness that will fulfill and satisfy our hearts.

Verse six is a turning point in “The Beatitudes.” The first three are a call to reject our default view of self and the world. Those on the road to the Kingdom of heaven reject their own ability to please God and trust only in Christ to please God for them. They are poor (destitute) spiritually. They mourn the hopelessness of their own condition but only for a moment before God comforts them with His presence and peace. They turn away from seeking their own satisfaction and in gentleness (meekness) they entrust the outcome of their lives to Christ who loves them and gave Himself up for them. They are Gentle and without pursuing it they will inherit the earth.

When we empty ourselves of what we want and reject our own righteousness the vacuum that follows is a spiritual hunger for God’s ways… for His righteousness. We need to fill our souls with the ways of God. This is a hallmark of saving faith. It wants God! It wants His attitudes, thoughts and actions!

We are talking about Salvation in this verse. This is what the Kingdom of Heaven is like and this is what the person who enters it is like. The default condition of all mankind is self-righteousness. It is the belief that the good go to heaven and as long as there is someone who is worse than you then you are okay. Paul was such a man. He describes this universal human plan of salvation this way:

**Col. 2:20-23** If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with use)-- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Salvation comes when men forsake human morality and religion and ritual and trust only in Christ Jesus. He was truly without sin and so died for your sin and paid for your salvation.

**Eph. 2:4-9** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

The greatest obstacles to salvation are not drunkenness, immorality and the like. They are religion, ritual, morality and self-righteousness. The first three beatitudes call all men to forsake them. This forth one instructs us to replace them all with God’s righteousness which is found in Jesus.

**"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for (The) righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Matt. 5:6:**  Jesus put the definite article “The” in front of righteousness indicating that it was a particular and singular righteousness. In other words it is unique and found only in God. It is The Righteousness that can save a man. But it is not just a one time event when you come to believe and trust only in Jesus for Salvation.

The grammar of hunger and thirst in Greek go like this; Happy, joyful and content are those who are continually hungering and thirsting for Righteousness. After having seen and experienced the righteousness that is God in Christ Jesus, we will only ever want more. If you have ever had the thought, “When I get to heaven I will know everything there is to know about God,” then you need to push that out of your mind. You will never know everything about God. You will never fully comprehend Him, but you will continually and eagerly hunger to know.

Moses spoke to Christ in the burning bush and then watched God decimate the greatest military power on earth and free Israel from captivity. He saw the Red Sea parted! He saw the Shekinah Glory! He saw Pharaoh’s army destroyed! He saw the manna fall from heaven and the water spew from the rock! But on Mount Sinai Moses was boldly wanting to see more.

**Exod. 33:18** Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"

David knew God and had seen Him in His sanctuary and yet could say…

**Psalm 63:1-3**  …. O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. 3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.

Paul met Jesus along the Damascus road, was schooled by God for years in the desert and was even caught up bodily into heaven to see things no one had ever seen…and yet… Paul describes this post salvation hunger for righteousness this way…

**Phil. 3:8-9** …. I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,

This continual hunger and thirst can never be fully assuaged in this life. We should all make peace with this. We will not come to a place of full rest or satisfaction as long as we are living in a world given over to sin. But we can be happy and blessed in the pursuit of God. To hunger and thirst after Him guarantees joy, happiness, contentment and satisfaction in a material world that gives absolutely none of those things. God gives them.

We call this quest for God and knowing Him “sanctification.” It is your destiny for eternity but it begins in this life.

**Romans 8:29** For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

The person who has trusted in The Righteousness of Jesus alone for salvation will also hunger for more of it. Salvation is never enough for the man or woman who has truly trusted in Christ alone. If you have trusted in Christ’s Righteousness, which is “The Righteousness of God” but are living in fear, uncertainty, anxiety, anger, worry, grief, unforgiveness and the like then you need to start your pursuit of Christ now. Hungering and thirsting are continual conditions. Have any of you eaten or had something to drink today? Do you plan to be hungry and thirsty after church? Hence the analogy. We do not have a nice meal and then just never eat again. Our favorite meal or dessert both satisfies us and makes us hungry to eat it again very soon. So are you saying we will never be satisfied?

No! We are saying that we will be continually satisfied again and again …over and over…every time you hunger and thirst for Christ and the experiential knowledge of God.

So that spiritual hunger and thirst that brings us salvation is also God’s means for our growth and conformity to the image of Christ. It drives us to know God and God can only be known in this world through The Word of God. There is no other way. All other methods are of man. They are easily hijacked by the devil to lead men astray. Ecstasy, transes, visions, modern day prophets, healers and miracle workers are all easily used to deceive and lead people toward men and what they can do. The Scripture alone will lead you to know and love Christ. Hunger and Thirst for Christ are the evidence of Salvation and the means of Sanctification. They continually satisfy our born again souls

Be regularly where The Word of God is honored, loved, and preached without apology. That will make you hungry for God like enjoying that favorite meal will make you want to eat it again.

**Jeremiah 15:16** Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.

BUT: Jesus said such ones “They shall be satisfied!” It goes like this in the original: “They themselves will be given satisfaction in the future!”

There is a lovely paradox here. We are continually satisfied by hungering and thirsting for God’s Righteousness in Christ while at the same time we are also given a deep and abiding joy (blessing) even in this life. It is yours for the hungering. Although we are living in a sinful and corrupt world God still tells us that He will not withhold good from us. Even our trials and griefs have meaningful purpose for those who hunger to know God.

**Ps. 34:10** The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.

**Jn. 4:13-14** Jesus answered (the woman thirsting at the well) and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

**Jn. 6:35** Jesus said to them (some of the 5,000 He just fed), "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

So although we are blessed and satisfied continually in this life as we hunger for Christ, there is an abiding satisfaction with Christ that only grows as we seek Him. AND…there is coming a definitive satisfaction for those who hunger and thirst for God.

Jesus will come for us and we will be finally transformed to be like Christ. Not god by any stretch. We will not be all knowing, but we will be once and for all delivered from the power of sin and from our brokenness. We will be actually righteous and our hunger for His Righteousness will finally be satisfied.

**1 Cor. 15:50-55** Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

In His Kingdom He will bless us with a new heart. One not ruined by Adam’s sin or our own.

**Jer. 31:33-34** "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

**Ezek. 36:26-27** "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

**CONCLUSION:** Righteousness is the defining characteristic of God! God has it and we do not. The heart of man is not inclined toward righteousness. It is God who acts to make us alive to Christ even when we were dead. We become blessed, happy and joyfully satisfied with Christ. The reborn child of God is like every newborn… hungry. If you do not feed a baby he or she will die. If you feed them junk they will not grow and become sick. The New Born believer hungers and thirst for The Righteousness of God. No hunger = no life!

When God causes us to see our desperate lack of righteousness and destitute condition we will mourn the offenses we have committed toward God, but not for long. Christ Himself will comfort us. Men are never truly comforted until they have looked with the God of creation on their own true condition, owned it and then been embraced by the Savior who gave His life in their place.

What follows is a meekness (gentleness) of soul that expresses total dependence on God’s work for us. Having forsaken every last scrap of our own righteousness we will hunger for the righteousness that only God can give. And God absolutely changes our lives when we come to Him this way.

This is the narrow way that Jesus spoke of. When He said, “few there are who find it,” He did not mean that the entrance has not been thoroughly pointed out to lost men of all ages, but that there are few who will humble themselves as beggars in order to enter. John MacArthur summarizes this beatitude in his commentary on Matthew.

“When our spiritual hunger and thirst are genuine they will make no conditions; they will seek and accept God’s righteousness in whatever way He chooses to provide it and will obey His commands no matter how demanding they may be. The least of God’s righteousness is more valuable than the greatest of anything we possess in ourselves or that the world can offer. The rich young ruler wanted only the part of God’s Kingdom that fit his own plans and desires, and he was therefore unfit for the kingdom. He thirsted more for other things than for the things of God. His conditions for God’s blessings barred him from them.

The spiritually hungry do not ask for Christ and economic success, Christ and personal satisfaction, Christ and popularity, or Christ and anything else. They want only Christ and what God in His wisdom and love sovereignly provide through Christ---whatever that may or may not be.” ***John MacArthur Jr***

Isaiah prays and worships God for His generous love to those who hunger for Him…for His righteousness. Isaiah gives insights …. Inspired insights to the thoughts of one who hungers and thirst after righteousness.

**Isa. 26:7-13** The way of the righteous is smooth; O Upright One, make the path of the righteous level. 8 Indeed, *while following* the way of Your judgments, O LORD, We have waited for You eagerly; Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of *our* souls.

9 At night my soul longs for You, Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently; For when the earth experiences Your judgments The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. 10 *Though* the wicked is shown favor, He does not learn righteousness; He deals unjustly in the land of uprightness, And does not perceive the majesty of the LORD. 11 O LORD, Your hand is lifted up *yet* they do not see it. They see *Your* zeal for the people and are put to shame; Indeed, fire will devour Your enemies. 12 LORD, You will establish peace for us since You have also performed for us all our works. 13 O LORD our God, other masters besides You have ruled us; *But* through You alone we confess Your name.