

LONGING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Matt. 5:6

Introduction:

I want first to tell you two stories. We usually pursue what we really want. A woman was smiling while other Sunday School class members were complaining about the difficulty of getting to Sunday School regularly and on time, because of household responsibilities and children.

It was discovered that this woman regularly got breakfast for her husband and nine boarders. She prepared her three children and then walked seven blocks to the church, carrying one child in her arms. The point is, she hungered for God's word and for righteousness. And these petty excuses seemed to be humorous to her.

To be sure the Spiritual hunger will not be satisfied with wishful thinking.

Now the other story is one I read that happened along the sea coast. Many people had gathered in that area for relaxation and to be lazy. Not far away was a coast guard station which some of the people visited. Now the atmosphere there was very different. Everyone seemed to be always busy, boats, and other gear were kept in readiness. This was not a play place. Now some of the people were on the beach for a vacation, but the coast guardsmen were there on business to save lives when needed. And they were ready and qualified to fight a storm by staying prepared and ready. Our Christian readiness is based on the one principle of obedience unto Christ.

✓ Mr. Steadfast in Pilgrim's Progress says "I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of". Wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot.

How should our desire to follow Christ be expressed. A servant obeys and follows his master. A soldier obeys and follows his general. An actor follows the script. So sinners should follow their Saviour.

✓ A little girl in Vacation Bible School was called on to recite the 10 Commandments. And when she failed, she said I guess I haven't been practicing them lately.

In a more serious vain, this could well be the reason for the failure of good discipleship today.

✓ The Sermon on the Mount begins with the word blessed. Now Webster says blessed means those who are spiritually happy will seek after righteousness. Happiness comes as a by-product of this thirst. Spiritually happy are those who are poor, in spirit - or those who mourn. Or those who are meek. And tonight we come to those who long for righteousness.

Happiness is a matter of being (alive) to what God gives us. Jesus had this, supreme happiness, in his own life and he was telling his disciples how they too could have this happiness, by being in harmony with God.

Before I launch into this text further, let me give you the illustration of Justice Holmes. ~~He~~ once said, I always thought, when I got to be 4 score years, I could wrap up my life in a scroll, tie a pink ribbon around it, put it away in a drawer and go on doing the things I wanted to do.

But I learned when you have taken one trench, there is always a new firing line beyond.

Now that is how joy in living grows. There must be this longing for and this searching.

✓ There is in all men a hunger for food.

There is also in all men a hunger for God, and God's love.

You may give a man freedom, but that will not quench his thirst for fellowship with God because he will still behave like an animal.

All the nations of the earth tonight could be set free, but men will never know the happiness until there is that longing in the heart.

I read the story about a little boy in an orphanage. They were talking to him about being adopted out. This couple began to tell him all the things which they could do for him. They told him in glowing terms. The boy said, if you have nothing to offer me except a good home, clothes, and toys - like the other kids have, why I would just as soon stay right here. The woman asked what would you like to have besides these things which we have talked about. The boy replied, I just want someone to love me. Now that seems to be the story around this world. The gadgets, the things we get, will never really make us happy. But Jesus said congratulations when you long for righteousness and you thirst to do those things that are wright.

✓ 6 We dig a little further into the Sermon on the Mount. And we come to the 6th verse.

I. Let us define this Spiritual appetite.

Jesus in the Beatitudes comes to the place now for a perfect test. A perfect test of discipleship. It really tests a man concerning his doctrine and his own salvation. For Jesus employs here -- hunger and thirst.

You know what hunger is, you feel a pain, you feel a little faint. You know what the matter of thirst is - there is a certain dryness in your mouth. And you feel like you need refreshment. David said as the heart panteth after the water broke, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. Now this is the point, that Jesus is making. He was hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

There are some people who go astray at this point of the whole question. The question of righteousness. It may mean to them just being deepened. Or just being moral just up to a certain point.

The desire here of the regenerated soul is toward God, and for righteousness which ultimately means being like our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the standard. Now if you want to face God and spent eternity in his holy presence, we must be like him.

No one can be in the presence of God who has this image of sin remaining in him. Here is a righteousness which demands perfection. And the moment we realize this, we realize that this is something we cannot do ourselves.

The Gospel is really not easy after all. Sometimes we make it too easy. The demands of the Gospel really are impossible.

But this reveals where we are exactly in our Christian life. They who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. Therefore, they are happy.

They are filled immediately. We have known forgiveness. The Christians know they have been forgiven. He knows that he is covered by the righteousness of God. And he has peace with God. Not that we are hoping to have it, but it has been imputed unto him - his sins have been forgiven.

It is not enough for us to mourn over our sins. But there must be a desire.

Now we really want to know how to increase this hunger for God and this thirst.

What is it like, are we filled. Have we got this satisfaction. Are we aware of this dealing with God in us.

Is the fruit of the spirit being manifest in our lives. Are we concerned about that. Are we experiencing love to God, love to other people. Are we manifesting long-suffering, goodness, meekness, faith, and gentleness, and temperance.

They that hunger and thirst and long -- shall be filled. They are enjoying these things. They are aware of the Holy Spirit and all of his mighty working within. Forming Christ in us more and more. Are we thus filled. Is this your experience. Do you know that your sins are forgiven. Are you rejoicing in the fact. Is there something in your heart that causes you to long for the righteousness and fellowship with God. Is there something in you or in the woman that I mentioned a moment ago who made all the preparations in her home and at last made her way to Sunday School and church every Sunday.

There are two or three things about describing this spiritual appetite, this longing.

1. There is life wherever there is hunger.

The Italian Suez Canal - showing some group for America
an Egyptian Mummy - What is his name, in the class, what country -
-6- Mummy - Mummies
no appetite

Used spirit

Dead men do not need food - they do not crave water.

2. Men who lack spirituality do not need it. For example, Pharaoh hardened his heart and that most dangerous process took place in his heart. There was no hunger, no longing in his heart for God or for righteousness. And his heart got harder.

Now those who have no longing are dead in trespasses and in sin. You are like a dead man.

You know they tell us of a man who goes out in the cold bitter weather in the North. He may feel his feet becoming num and after awhile he has the impulse to lay down in the snow and go to sleep. And he will freeze to death. He must run and get the circulation - stimulate his blood so this won't happen to him. This ought to be a spiritual warning to you - if you do not have any hunger or longing for righteousness, then it may be that you are dead - that you have never been converted.

3. This longing is a part of the Christian nature.

Now you cannot get any deeper than a man's nature - you cannot go beyond it. It is anormal thing and this comes into a man's heart. There is something that desires this. That is why a man wants to build a temple, he wants to build a church. It is the normal hunger.

Now I could contrast this with the physical man. It is according to a man's nature that he gets hungry. That he wants food when he is hungry and water when he is thirsty. For example, a sick man, a man who is not normally well physically

- he does not crave food. He does not long for a drink. It leaves him. He has no thirsting. Now, in the same way, it happens to a man if he does not have this spiritual nature born in him - he will not long for it.

David said in the Psalm - oh God, thou art my God. Early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and a thirsty land. Psalm. 63:1.

If David had not had that spiritual note within him - he would never have longed to meet with God. He would never had that appetite.

In fact, the man who does not have this nature is in a decaying situation. It is like a tooth that is decayed. It becomes dead and useless.

✓ 4. This longing is a universal part of the Kingdom man.

Now this goes back to primitive times. And I have never really met the man or woman who are Christians who were incapable of being hungry and thirsting for spiritual things. Now the same thing is true with the physical. It is a universal thing with all of you. You have an appetite. It is a god-given appetite. And the person next to you has an appetite. The thing that ruins that appetite is - if an invalid has to stay in bed for years, they lose their appetite, or if you eat a lot of sweets before your meals, you may not have an appetite for food. Something happens to it. What I am saying to you is - you have an appetite if you are a disciple of Christ.

The whole aim in this definition is that of righteousness. The aim is conforming to God's will. Blessed are the men and the women who long more and more than anything else to be in God's will, to do good, and to stay away from wrong. And this

is the highest aim in the Christian's life.

Now of course Satan seeks to draw men down. He takes that longing away. He seeks to condemn sin in high places. But they cannot recognize sin in their own personal lives. Now the Bible teaches us that God is holy and pure. If we are going to have fellowship with God then we must long to have this righteousness.

The definition then here means death unto sin, a deliberate choice of God. It implies that you are going to find satisfaction. And your desires are going to be satisfied because the object of the Christian desire is righteousness and this is conformitive to God's will. This takes the form of doing right. And they shall have righteousness.

✓ II. How Can We ^{Know We} Are Hungry and Thirsty.

Are we aware of it. Are we filled. Do we have this in our experience There is the vital thing that is all we have to be concerned about. And I suggest that if you really long to discover whether or not you have this, is to look at Hebrews 11. Because there are some of the greatest and most glorious examples of people who did hunger and thirst after righteousness, and they were filled. Go through the whole Bible, go through the New Testament and read about some of the great saints who were in the church of Christ. Read about their confessions. Read about the lives of mighty men in our own generation who have enjoyed this fullness. How did they arrive at it. If we want to know what hungering and thirsting means, we must study the Scriptures.

I am going to leave that question with you for the moment but I hope you get the answer as we go along.

✓ III. Things That Spoil The Longing For Righteousness

Now there are some things that will spoil and hurt this longing in a life. There are some things that we cannot take into our lives.

For example, there is the nordoo plant of Australia. It resembles a flower but it lacks any helpful properties and those who feed up it will in a few weeks die of starvation. Those men who seek after things that are not bread and refuse God's gift will no doubt starve their souls.

✓ 1. Pleasure

This ruins the appetite of the things of God.

Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. Now his appetite for spiritual things were absorbed by sinful things.

I read a very interesting story of a man walking down a road with a pig following him. A friend asked him how he got the pig to follow. Very simple, I drop a bean every two steps, and the pig likes beans. So he just follows along.

✓ 2. Self-sufficiency

This too, I think, can damage a man's hunger for God.

There is no man so empty as the man who thinks he is full, and because of his own merit, this to me is a fatal disease.

You know there was a church that said, we are rich, we have everything. And what did Jesus say. You are poor, you are blind, you are naked.

✓ 3. In the 3rd place, secret sins. I think this will quench your longings for righteousness. There may be resentment in your heart against your neighbor. You

may have filled your heart with wickedness. There may be jealousy, envy, prejudice - now the thing that happens, is there is no room for God. And this really spoils your appetite.

✓ 4. Neglect of your spiritual life.

I think this will hurt your longing for righteousness and for God.

You get too busy in everyday affairs of life.

If you ask a lot of Christians - people if they are Christians. They will say, "I think so". or "I hope so". Now lots of people have crowded Christ out. They have neglected their souls. They have quenched the hunger and the thirst by neglect.

The Prodigal Son went off with a devil's crowd. He went to a far country. And finally there was a change from neglect to a positive attitude and he said, I am going back, I am going to my father and the whole key to the situation was getting right with God. Now when he got right with God, the earthly father said all things are now yours. If you hunger or thirst, you are going to be filled.

✓ 5. Your own false righteousness.

This too is a thing that spoils.

The Scripture puts it this way. Man's righteousness is as filthy rags. Paul said this that there were some people who thought they were wonderful, but he counts them as refuse. Phil. 3. They had a sense of self satisfaction, they did not need anyone else. And Paul says in me dwelleth no good thing. Now if we want to pat ourselves on the back, and feel a sense of self-satisfaction, in the things we have done, we are still holding on to our own self-righteousness. We must realize that we have nothing. Filthy rags. There must be a deep awareness. It means that we have a desire within us to be like the saints, Abraham, Moses, Daniel.

We want to be like these people but we want to be like them in the wrong way. We may desire to enjoy the blessings, without really desiring to be like them.

Let me illustrate. There was a false prophet named Balaam. He once said, "let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like His." Balaam wanted to die like the righteous. But he did not want to live like the righteous. Indeed, that is true of many of us. We want the blessings of the righteous. We'd like to die like the righteous. And we come to our death bed, we'd like to have the glorious salvation. Yes, but if we want to die like the righteous, we must also want to live like the righteous. These two things go together. Heaven is open to you. But it does not work like that. I must long to live like that - if I want to die like that.

This hungering and thirsting was an (active) element, it was not passive. Now people who really desire this, they are not going to sit down and hope these things are going to come. But they are going to avoid everything that is opposed to such righteousness. There are certain things in this life that are opposed to God, and his righteousness. There is no question about this. And we know things that are bad. Like in the hospital we take the patient that has some infection and keep him off by himself. But it does not stop at that. We treat them. And we must know the bad and the harmful things that can dull and take off the spiritual appetite.

If you are spending the biggest part of your time with them and you are desiring less of the things of God, then your appetite is in question. You have spoiled it.

Now let me pursue this just a step or two further - I talked to you about defining this. And how you can tell whether you have it or not, and I have

disgust some things that will quench your longing.

✓ IV. Nurturing the Spiritual Life.

Next I would like to talk to you about some things that will increase your longing and will stimulate you in wanting to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

✓ 1. We must begin with conversion.

Now this comes back to that question I ASK, how can you tell if you have it. Well, it begins with a change of heart and the mind that is turned and receives Christ Jesus.

~~Now~~ Now this is more than just to believe on something.

You may believe in a train you may believe it will do certain things. You may even buy a ticket. But if you stand there and watch the train go off down the track, and if you do not get aboard, you are not going to take the trip. You are not going to make it.

Now you can stand here tonight, wherever you are, you can believe a lot about the Bible. You can know some things about Jesus Christ. And you can be absolutely sure, and you can know all the ins and outs of the church. But you have not received it. You have not boarded the old ship Zion. You have not trusted in Jesus Christ.

✓ 2. In the second place, you need victory in your present life. Now the Holy Spirit will groom this by sanctification. And separate you unto a clean way of living. You may encourage the longing for righteous things by seeking to live victorious lives.

Now Paul says there were things that he did not do, and there was some things that he should have done, that he just didn't get around to doing. He settled it all, when he said, who shall deliver me from the body of this death. And I think God through Jesus Christ. Now Christ is your deliverer.

Why do you do the things you do as a Christian.

Why do you leave the things undone as a Christian.

Why do you live a defeated life.

You claim to be a Christian. The great victorious is one of surrender.

3. Third, there must be exercise as in sports. A man must exercise, he must eat properly. He must practice, he must keep his whole life toned up. Now the Christian who is going to long for righteousness, who is going to exercise in the holy life, the kind of life that he lives will be here a part of it. And part of his exercise is going to be that he is going to try and climb higher and higher with Christ. The whole hope of his soul is to be satisfied as he fixes his eyes on the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Hudson Taylor said that he had been 40 years in China. That he had been able to do very little there. But he said, I learned to live alone with God. And to know that in his heart, God is love.

A Christian once gave a tract to a lady in a restaurant. The lady didn't know whether she would receive it or not - but she did. She merely said, may I give you a little booklet to read. The strange lady took it and in a few minutes, she said, this is what I need. Just what I have been looking for. Thank you so much.

This is what everybody is looking for. Everybody is searching and looking to have that longing in their hearts satisfied.

Augustine once said, Thou madest us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until it rests in thee. Now this is the longing which Jesus spoke about.

Stewart Hamlin, in Hollywood, a great sportsman and radio star - he went on to a meeting and he went there to scoff. But under the conviction of God's spirit, the following day at 4 o'clock in the morning he accepted Christ in his hotel room. And he told that that afternoon - he told his audience, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal saviour this morning - October 18, at 4:30 A. M. That was October several years back. And he said, I am selling my entire racing stable. I wonder why, there must have been a hunger in his heart, he realized that he must nurture that longing.

Louis Pasteur was bending over his microscope and a student came to the room. He thought the scientist was in prayer. Pasteur lifted his head, and the student said, excuse me Sir, I thought you were praying. I was said the professor. I am searching out the ways of God.

4. Fifth, keep this constantly before you. Discipline your life. Don't just hunger and thirst after righteousness day by day. They may be tremendously busy but they will always find time for God. First things must come first. There are priorities in your life.

5. Sixth, put yourself in the way of righteousness. Now you really cannot create all of this by yourself. And you really can't produce it. I illustrate it with Bartimaeus. He was a blind man if you remember. And he could not get his sight back, but one thing he could do - he put himself in the way of getting his sight.

He heard that Jesus was coming that way. So he took up his place on the road. And he got to the place where he could put himself in the way of receiving sight. Now, the man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is never going to miss an opportunity of being in a place where he can find this righteousness.

Take for example, the house of God. The church where we meet to consider these things. Now I meet people here who talk to me about their spiritual problems. They have something that may be lacking. But they come here, put themselves in the way of getting it. Now a hap-hazzard way of attendance - you will never find it. You will never know this hunger and this thirst. The man who will say, I cannot afford to lose any opportunity. Wherever this is being talked about, I want to be there. Now, that's good common sense.

Don't you really enjoy being in the presence of a Godly or saintly man. Don't you feel better because of it. You like to talk to a person like that.

6 ~~Seventh, read your Bible.~~ This is a great help. You can get a lot of the newspaper and a lot out of T. V. But let me tell you something, you try the Bible - it will help you at this point.

7 ~~Eighth, spend time in prayer.~~ Don't forget this. This is the place where God can speak to you.

8 ~~Ninth, read the story of great men~~ - biographies, study the saints, of literature. Seek righteousness everywhere. Study the life of Jacob and how he struggled with the angels. You can never find it in yourself. Yet the people who sit back and do nothing never seem to get it. Now that's not the method of God.

✓ V. Note The Promise Is Certain

God says that you are going to be filled and that he is going to bless you.

If you hunger for such a walk, you are going to get it.

What is your Appetite like Now?

longer to be like God?

" " look at The cross?

Soul weak - Malnutrition, lose weight, clothes loose, not fit. - They need food - Need Be filled.

This is explanation of The Atonement!

What is great wrong against Man? SIN!

Righteousness an activity - Because it is engaged in seeing right prevail - ideal - wants to see right prevail!

Satisfying, powerful, abiding