



Part 23: Blessed are those Who Hunger & Thirst for Righteousness

Matthew 5:1-12

Congratulations! Joyful are those who hunger and thirst for relational integrity and communal wholeness, for they will be filled.

I. Excavating the Christian Life as a Disciple

The gospel is the good news that God has kept His promises to Israel to rescue and renew His groaning creation from Satan, sin, and death through King Jesus (his life, death, resurrection, and ascension). Life in God's beautiful Kingdom is available now and forever to all who entrust themselves to King Jesus and follow him as Lord.

Contrasts this with the “getting souls into heaven” gospel. The fourth beatitude challenges this popular version of the gospel and Christian life in a single sentence.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” Matthew 5:6

II. The Fourth Beatitude (Matthew 5:6)

A. What is Righteousness?

Righteousness = right-relatedness.

“... relationship is what righteousness is all about. ...righteousness is all about living in faithfulness to the terms of the relationship.” – Darrell Johnson, *The Beatitudes*

In our secular, individualistic, Western culture, we tend to think of righteousness as a private virtue. However, since righteousness is inherently relational, it has a communal dimension. This communal dimension is expressed throughout the Old Testament.

“There is absolutely no concept in the Old Testament with so central a significance for all the relationships of human life as that of righteousness. It is the standard not only for man’s relationship to God, but also for his relationships to his fellows, reaching right down to the most petty wranglings – indeed, it is even the standard for man’s relationship to the animals and to his natural environment.” – Gerhard von Rad

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX), *dikaiosyne* is used to translate the Hebrew *tsedaqah*, which means being just or righteous referring to a life of right relationships. *Tsedaqah* includes a commitment to relate to others in one’s community, especially the poor and powerless, with fairness, compassion, and generosity.

In the Old Testament, *tsedaqah* is closely related to *mishpat* meaning justice. Fundamentally *mishpat* or justice is to treat people fairly with special concern for the powerless known as the “quartet of the vulnerable” meaning the widows, orphans, immigrants and poor (Zech. 7:10-11). God’s covenant people were to live in a way that expressed His character as a defender of the vulnerable (Deut. 4:6-8; Psalm 146:7-9).

Righteousness (*tsedaqah*) and justice (*mishpat*) are often brought together expressing the Lord’s character and the character expected of His covenant people. Righteousness and justice will be the hallmarks of the reign of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:7; 32:1; 42:1; 61).

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.” Psalm 89:14

“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” Isaiah 9:7

Congratulations! Be joyful! The grace of the King rests upon you, and you belong to Him forever. You, who least expected it, are now in the beautiful Kingdom, and your life is forever changed.

“...if you are trying to live your life in accordance with the Bible, the concept and call to justice are inescapable. We do justice when we give all human beings their due as creations of God. Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs, but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable. This kind of life reflects the character of God. It consists of a broad range of activities, from simple fair and honest dealings with people in daily life, to regular, radically generous giving of your time and resources, to activism that seeks to end particular forms of injustice, violence, and oppression.” – Tim Keller, *Generous Justice*

Congratulations! Joyful are those who hunger and thirst for relational integrity and communal wholeness, for they will be filled.

B. Hunger and Thirst

First, we must not spiritualize this beatitude any more than the first three. Jesus is announcing good news to the economically and socially vulnerable who do long for communal wholeness.

“The great reversals heard in the original Beatitudes ought to be taken seriously: the kingdom of God belongs to the despised weak people who are unable to defend themselves.” – Dale Bruner

For the rest of us, there is a Spirit-awakened and empowered desire to see relational integrity and communal wholeness in the Name of King Jesus.

“Dissatisfaction is the second-best thing there is because it dissolves the glue that entraps us to false satisfactions, and drives us to God, the only true satisfaction.” – Peter Kreeft

See Matthew 6:33.

C. When will we be filled?

The ultimate satisfaction or filling will come when King Jesus finally returns to make all things new (see Revelation 7:9-17).

“And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’...Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst...And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Revelation 7:10, 16-17

Congratulations! Be joyful! The grace of the King rests upon you, and you belong to Him forever. You, who least expected it, are now in the beautiful Kingdom, and your life is forever changed.

III. The Gospel Paradox

“... to have found God and still pursue Him is the soul’s paradox of love...” – A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

“In things spiritual, increasing desire is a sign that satisfaction is drawing near.” –George MacDonald

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you heard the fourth beatitude explained?
2. How have you understood “righteousness”? Have you thought about it more individualistically as a personal virtue or relationally and communally? What was new for you?
3. How do the Old Testament concepts of righteousness and justice inform your thinking about righteousness? Do they present any challenges?
4. How can you better align yourself with this beatitude?
5. How do you need the Lord’s help?