

THE FOURTH BEATITUDE

Matthew 5:6

Intro: As we consider the Beatitudes of our Lord which are found at the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount. I would like to encourage all of us to read and reread these simple statements which the Lord made at the beginning of His public ministry. Think carefully and prayerfully about each one. They deserve all of the thought and prayer that we can give to them. In one way, they are very simple and easy to understand. On the other hand, they are so profound that none of us can really feel that we have exhausted their meaning. Perhaps you have even memorized them at some time in the past. Read them over and over until you can repeat them from memory again. I believe that the more attention we can give to them, the more we will be doing what this fourth Beatitude encourages us to do. It will create a hunger and thirst in our hearts to understand what each one means, and to see that we are actually doing or being what they ask of us as members of the family of God.

They all promise us happiness. That is what a Beatitude is, and does. But they are so different from the world's idea of happiness. If we follow the Lord's words here which promise us happiness, we are not going to be disappointed like we always are if we do what the world says that we should do in order to be happy.

The Fourth Beatitude

I agree with those who say that this fourth Beatitude is the key to all of the others. We will not be able to profit from the other Beatitudes if we do not practice this first. If you give some thought to this Beatitude, I believe that you will see that here in this one verse we have two great truths:

- 1) This Beatitude gives us the definition of a Christian. And in this respect it is like the other Beatitudes. Nobody but a true Christian is going to be interested in righteousness.
- 2) But also in this Beatitude we have the definition of the Christian life. A true Christian is one who is going to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Could you possibly think that a person is a Christian who is not interested in righteousness? We may not "hunger and thirst after righteousness" immediately after we are saved, but the Bible makes it very clear that a person who is truly saved, is a new creature, a new person, "old things are

passed away, and all things are become new.” See 2 Cor. 5:17.

What is righteousness? Probably the simplest answer to that question is that righteousness is what God is. In 2 Cor. 5:21 we read what the Apostle Paul said about the righteousness of God. He wrote, “For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him [Christ].

Righteousness is the opposite of sin. We were born in sin. We are sinners by nature, and so we are sinners by choice. A person who is not a Christian is not going to be interested in being like God. That is the reason I have said that this Beatitude describes a Christian. Only a Christian is going to want to learn about God, and to be like Him.

But in the hope of making myself clear in what I am saying let me mention a couple of other things about righteousness. It is both imputed and imparted to a Christian. To have righteousness imputed to us is what God does when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation from sin and from the judgment of God. The righteousness of Christ is put on our account before God in heaven. This is perfect. It is complete. And it is the same for every child of God. This is what the Bible calls justification. All charges against us before God because of our sins, are removed, and we are declared righteous before God. This is what salvation is. It is imputed to us by God because of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is also an imparted righteousness of God. This is a practical righteousness. It comes to us from God through Christ as we grow in our lives as Christians. It is the same as imputed righteousness, but this is when it begins to become evident in our lives that God is making us like He, and like Christ is, and like the Holy Spirit is. And so, while the righteousness of God in us is the same, yet how it is lived out in our lives depends upon our growth as Christians. That is why I have said that the fourth Beatitude describes not only describes what a Christian is, but also the Christian life. We are never going to become gods, but we are going to be like God. The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He [the Lord Jesus] shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”

Now what about the verbs, “hunger and thirst”? What did our Lord mean

for us to understand by these words? Let me take you to some words which the Apostle Peter wrote to bring out the meaning of these words, “hunger and thirst.”

You see, not everything about salvation is found in just one place in the Bible. It is scattered throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, so that we will read all of the Bible.

Peter was like most of us are; he had a lot of trouble finding out how much he needed the Lord’s help constantly in order to live a godly life. The verses which he wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit and which I want to call to your attention to are the first three verses of 1 Peter 2. Please turn in your Bible to them, and follow as I read:

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2:1-3).

Now in the Beatitude that we are studying the Lord said, “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” What did he mean by “hunger and thirst.” I am indebted to the Puritan Thomas Watson for the answer I am going to give you. He said that those two words, “hunger and thirst” speak of the way, according to this passage in 1 Peter where he said we are to “desire the sincere,” the pure, the unadulterated, “milk of the Word.”

Now if you and I are to “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” where are we going to go to get such hunger and thirst satisfied? If the Lord Jesus were still here on earth, and we could get to Him, that is where we would go. But He is not here. So where shall we go? We do as Peter said. We go to the Word. And we are to hunger and thirst for the Word like a newborn babe desires his, or her, mother’s milk.

Now Peter didn’t mean that we just go to the Word “as newborn babes” just when we are first saved, but we go like newborn babes all through our lives. And what is going to keep us coming to the Word? “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.’ It is finding the Lord in the Word that keeps us coming back again and again to the Word. Our Lord on one occasion told a group of Jews, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of Me” (John 5:39).

Now going back to our Beatitude, let us ask ourselves if we really do “hunger and thirst after righteousness”?

I believe it is very important for all of us who know the Lord to have a quiet time each day when we read at least a chapter of two, and spend some time in fellowship with the Lord in prayer. For those who are parents it is especially important if we are to set a good example before our children. But I have found as I have gotten older that our quiet times in the Word and prayer should lead into lives of constant fellowship with the Lord. As we read our Bibles we find that He is with us twenty-four hours of every day. That He even watches over us while we sleep. And being God, He can be with each one of us just like He was nowhere else, and that He desires fellowship with us throughout the day. He wants us to feel our need of Him all day and all night.

How long are you up in the morning before you remember the Lord and start talking to Him? And when you read your Bible do you ask Him to show you in your reading what He wants you to see. I have found when I do that that I see many things that I have been overlooking before.

When you are reading your Bible, do you talk to Him about what you are reading? Do you turn the Word of God into prayer? Do you talk to the Lord about your sins? Have you told Him how you hate to displease Him, and how you want to delight to do His will? Do you pray that your family, and those you work with, and your friends, will see the Lord Jesus in you? I am trying to get all of us to understand more what it means to “hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

Isn't it tragic that our politicians and public officials can talk of all of the problems we face in our cities and states and country and world, and yet never even mention God? I mentioned some time ago in speaking of The Apostle John's description of the world – “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” that “the pride of life” is that feeling in us that we can take care of ourselves, and that we are sufficient for ourselves, and we don't realize “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17b). That is the way the Laodecians were, and very frankly gave evidence by the way that lived that they had need of nothing, not even of the Lord!

How different it is when David wrote in Psalm 42:2, “My soul thirsteth

for God!”

There is a wonderful promise attached to our Beatitude for tonight, and I must not overlook it. It is in the words, “for they shall be filled.” What does it mean, to “be filled”? To answer that, let’s go back to Peter’s illustration of a baby desiring his mother’s milk. Perhaps you have seen a baby who is restless and crying when the mother takes that little one, begins to nurse the baby. The crying stops, and when the baby’s tummy is full, the baby is usually asleep. There is no greater picture of satisfaction and rest.

“For they shall be filled” means *to be satisfied*. Sin does not satisfy. The world does not satisfy. A Christian who tried to live in the world and with the Lord, is never satisfied. It is only as we hunger and thirst for our Lord, and to be like our Lord, that there is satisfaction, and there is rest. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 107:8 and 9,

8 Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.

9 For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

Concl: Let each of us look at our lives tonight to see what they tell us about what we have been hungering and thirsting for. And if it has not been righteousness, the righteousness of God and of Christ. If we have had one foot in the world, and the other in the Church, let us confess our sin and ask the Lord to let us find that wonderful peace and rest when we hunger and thirst for Him, and only for Him.

(If time permits, read Phil. 3.)