

Matthew
Those Who Hunger & Thirst
Matthew 5:6
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Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

A number of years ago, a *New York Times* bestseller turned into a blockbuster movie. Both of them were entitled “*Unbroken*.” It's a remarkable story of an Olympic runner and a World War II veteran, Louie Zamperini. Louie's son, Luke, and his daughter-in-law, Lisa, attended the class that I pastored at Grace Community Church while we were there for all those years. And so, I had the opportunity to meet Louie and to hear his remarkable story firsthand. Here's how the author of the book of his life writes and describes the events that unfolded.

On a May afternoon in 1943, Louie took off on a search mission for a lost plane.

Somewhere over the Pacific, the engines on his bomber failed. The plane plummeted into the sea, leaving Louie and two other men stranded on a tiny raft. Drifting for weeks and thousands of miles, they endured starvation and desperate thirst. In fact, at three weeks, their hunger became so intense that they discussed the possibility of choosing and sacrificing one of them so that the others could live. But they decided they could never do that. So for forty-seven days, they survived solely on rainwater along with a few small fish and two albatrosses, all of them eaten raw. During their ordeal at sea, they lost half of their body weight. Two of the three men survived only to be captured and tortured by their Japanese captors.

As you read the book or watch the movie, the truth that comes out repeatedly in their story is that those dying of hunger and thirst are truly desperate. There is little that they will not do or at least consider doing. In the Beatitude that we come to today, our Lord says that those who belong to His spiritual kingdom have a spiritual thirst and hunger exactly like that.

Looking at the Beatitudes, we've discovered that they describe all true Christians. If the Holy Spirit lives within you, He has produced these eight qualities in you to some degree. They're not self-produced; they are instead produced by the Spirit and received by grace alone. In addition, we've learned that the opposite of each of these qualities describes every unbeliever. So, with that background, we come today to the fourth Beatitude in Matthew, chapter 5, verse 6. You follow along as I read it. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Now, the word 'blessed,' Jesus meant by that, that those who manifest these eight qualities are the ones who truly belong to His spiritual kingdom because of sovereign grace. They are truly spiritually blessed. And here, Jesus says that the spiritually blessed, the ones who belong to His kingdom, the ones who have been saved by His grace, they "are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Now, that is a remarkably profound statement because it tells us that we can identify a true Christian by what he or she desires, by what they crave. In fact, in this Beatitude, Jesus reveals three essential specifics about this kind of desire that marks every believer without exception. Let's look at these specifics together.

First of all, let's consider "The Illustration" of the true Christian's desire, "Physical Hunger and Thirst." Look at verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst." Now, Luke, in his version of the Beatitudes, mentions only hunger, but both gospel writers are illustrating the same truth. Jesus compares those who are spiritually blessed to those who are overcome by "Physical Hunger and Thirst." Now, let's start by admitting that those are not realities any of us have experienced. When it comes to water, our homes have a dozen faucets—or more! And with the simple twist of a handle, we can have endless gallons of water at our disposal. When we go out

to eat, the server brings us water, whether we ask for it or not. And now many of you carry this massive container of water with you everywhere you go.

As far as food, our pantries and our refrigerators are full of foods from all over the world.

Within minutes of our homes, there is at least one or perhaps multiple grocery stores with more than twenty aisles all fully-stocked with food from all over the world. Within a fifteen-minute radius of our homes, there are countless restaurants where they will serve us whatever we want. And they bring us a plate of food that twenty-five years ago would have been the serving platter. In fact, the servings have become so large that now an entire industry exists to make creative packaging so you can take your leftovers home. Most of us in this room have absolutely no idea what it means to be truly hungry or truly thirsty.

But in Israel, there are places like the Judean wilderness where Jesus was tempted, that are the most barren, desolate places on earth. And in Jesus' day, of course, they would have traveled by foot. So if you travel through an area like this and you had failed to properly plan, or you became lost in the process, you face real life-threatening thirst and hunger within a short period of time. That's why Jesus uses these images. You see, when the words 'hunger' and 'thirst' occur together in Scripture, they most often refer to physical hunger and thirst, but not the kind that we experience in the six hours between meals or the few minutes before we sip from our massive bottles. Instead, they often speak of profound physical hunger and thirst.

Let me give you a couple of illustrations. For example, like that in a POW camp. Deuteronomy 28:48, one of the curses on Israel would be this, "you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you." In other words, they're going to take you captive; you're going to be POWs, and they will come against you and you will be hungry and thirsty and naked, and you

will lack everything. That's the kind of hunger and thirst we're talking about. Or it's like that of a city that's under siege, 2 Chronicles, chapter 32, verse 11, “Is not Hezekiah misleading you to give yourselves over (to be under siege, the city under siege) to die by hunger and by thirst?” Imagine what it would be like to be hungry and thirsty in those circumstances, and you'll understand why Jesus chose these pictures to illustrate a true Christian's desire.

Why, because that kind of hunger and thirst is supreme. No desire surpasses it. When you truly need food and water, no other desire rivals it, and no other desire distracts you from it. It's also constant; it's relentless—it never leaves your mind! And it's insatiable—these desires can't be met only once. Eat and drink your fill now and within a short time, you will be desperately hungry and thirsty again. That's the illustration. In this Beatitude, Jesus uses the profound physical desire for water and food that are born of starvation and dehydration as a profound metaphor for spiritual desire. He pictures this desire that marks every true Christian as an intense, overwhelming, consuming desire like that. You see, to hunger and thirst spiritually is to desire something just as intensely as a starving person craves food and a dying man pants for water.

Now that brings us to a second specific. We've seen “The Illustration.” It couldn't be clearer. But let's look at “The Obsession” of the true Christian's desire. What exactly is the object of his desire? “Spiritual Righteousness.” The person who is blessed, the person who truly belongs to Jesus' spiritual kingdom, is marked by this intense, overwhelming desire. Verse 6, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

Now in Hebrew and in Greek, the word group that is ‘righteous’ or ‘righteousness’ comes from the domain of law and the courtroom. Righteousness has the fundamental idea of ‘conformity to a standard.’ In a legal context, it has to do with ‘how a person stands with reference to the law.’

One who has kept the law is (What?) ‘righteous.’ One who has not kept the law is ‘unrighteous.’ Now in Scripture, there are “Two Primary Types of Biblical Righteousness That belong to a True Believer,” two primary types, and you need to understand both of them. So let me walk through these two and compare and contrast.

First of all, there is “Imputed Righteousness.” Imputed simply means ‘credited to us,’ ‘put in our account.’ This describes “A righteous standing before the law that God gives the undeserving sinner by grace alone.” This is “Positional, legal righteousness.” It's not a righteousness that's inside of us. Instead, it is a righteousness that is “Alien to us, that is outside of us.” It describes the righteousness we receive in “Justification,” when we are declared righteous before God. It is not something that happens inside of us. It is “A legal decision that happens in heaven.” It happens in a moment of time, and it happens at the moment of our salvation.” We repent and believe, and we are justified. We are declared right. Righteousness is imputed to us. So, it is “The righteousness of Jesus that the Father deposits into our account by a gift of His grace alone.” If you're here this morning and you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, Paul says in Romans 3, you have no righteousness, “There is none righteous, not even one,” and you're not the exception. You have nothing that measures up to God's standard just like I don't. What you need is this righteousness. You need to repent and believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came into the world, who took on Himself full humanity, who lived a perfect life and then died on the cross to satisfy the justice of God against the sins of everyone who would believe in Him, and God raised Him from the dead. You need His righteousness to be credited to you because you have repented and believed in Him. And that's my prayer for you this morning.

The second type of biblical righteousness is “Personal Righteousness,” and it stands, really every point of it stands in contrast to the one we just looked at. It is, personal righteousness, is “A righteous character and conduct that conforms to God's law.” This is “Practical, moral righteousness.” This is not some righteousness alien to us. Instead, this is a righteousness that is “Within us,” and this describes not our justification but our “Sanctification.” It is the “Ongoing renovation of our souls.” It happens in us, and it doesn't happen in a moment; it happens “Over a lifetime;” and it doesn't happen at salvation, it happens “after salvation.” It is “The righteous character and conduct of Jesus that the Holy Spirit reproduces in our souls by His grace alone.” Those are the two types of righteousness that a true believer manifests and knows.

So, which of those two types does Jesus mean in this fourth Beatitude? I think He means both because, in Scripture, the two cannot be separated. We enter a right standing before God based solely on the righteousness of Jesus credited to our account. But once we have been justified, once we've received that right standing by faith and by grace alone, then that sinner always desires to be personally and practically righteous in their hearts; they want to obey God. So these two types of righteousness always go together. They can never be separated. Let me show you two biblical examples that I think will make this clear.

Turn back to Genesis, chapter 15. Here, Abraham experiences imputed righteousness. He has righteousness credited to him solely by faith alone. Now, I think this actually happened earlier. I think it happened back in Genesis, chapter 12, when God called him and gave him the Abrahamic Covenant, but here it's explicitly stated. Genesis, chapter 15, verse 6 says, “Then he (Abraham) believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.” By faith alone, he has righteousness reckoned to him, the righteousness of God, ultimately the righteousness of Christ Himself. So there's imputed righteousness, but it doesn't stop there; go over to chapter 18.

After he has received imputed righteousness, notice how God describes him, Genesis 18:19, “For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that Yahweh may bring upon Abraham what He has promised and spoken about him.” So there is imputed righteousness he receives and he's made right with God, and then having been made right with God, he receives and grows in personal righteousness in which he manifests obedience to God.

You see the same thing with the Apostle Paul. Turn over to Romans, chapter 3. In Romans 3, Paul talks about the Gospel by which we are justified, declared right before God, receive imputed righteousness. Romans 3:21, “But now apart from the Law, *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets.” What kind of righteousness? Verse 22, “even *the* righteousness of God (that comes to us) through faith in Jesus Christ (and that's true) for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and (we've all fallen.) fall short of the glory of God, being justified (and we are justified, we are declared right before God, we receive imputed righteousness.) as a gift by His grace (And how can God do that?) through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; (verse 25) through Jesus' death on the cross for our sins” (Summary paraphrase). So there is imputed righteousness.

But again, it doesn't stop there. The person who has been justified also grows in personal righteousness. Go over to Romans, chapter 6; Romans, chapter 6, and look at verse 17, “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin (That's your past.), you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed.” You believed the Gospel and you begin to grow in obedience. Verse 18, “And having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” Go down to verse 20, “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness;” you didn't care about it. But verse 22, “But now having been freed

from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.” So again, you see in the book of Romans, you have “Imputed Righteousness” in chapter 3, and then you have growing “Personal Righteousness” after that in chapter 6. That's the biblical pattern.

And I think that's what Jesus means when He says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” To “hunger and thirst for righteousness” then, is to have two overwhelming desires. Number one, a desire for “A Legal Standing of Righteousness” before God. You long to have a right standing with God. It's like the story Jesus told. We looked at it when we looked at the first Beatitude in Luke 18:13-14, of the tax collector who comes to the Temple, and he's so overcome by his sin and his spiritual poverty that he won't lift up his eyes to heaven, but he beats on his chest and he says, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner,” “God, be merciful to me, the sinner.” And Jesus says in the next verse, “this man went to his house (What?) justified,” declared right by God. He longed for, he craved, he desired that righteousness and God gave it to him.

But look at how Paul manifested this same desire. Turn over to Philippians, chapter 3. Paul here talks about and lists his spiritual assets, what he thought were assets before he came to Christ. He talks about them beginning in verse 4 down through verse 6, all the things that he once was proud of, but watch verse 7, here's what happened when he came to Christ:

But whatever things were gain to me (those things I thought were in my spiritual asset column), those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things (everything) 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 (I) count them (all

that stuff I lost) but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from keeping *the* Law, but that (the righteousness) which is through faith in Christ (Jesus), the righteousness which *comes* from God (solely) on the basis of faith.”

Paul says, “Let me tell you what this desire for a right legal standing before God looks like. It looks like you are willing to give up everything else to get Christ.” If you're a Christian, this is your heart. As you sit here this morning, if you're really in Christ, if you could put everything in the world on one side of the scale, and knowing that you have a right standing with God through Jesus Christ on the other side of the scale, this wouldn't even be a hard decision. If you're a true Christian, that's your heart.

But not only does the true Christian hunger and thirst for the legal standing of righteousness, but secondly, they hunger and thirst for “The Personal Character and Practice of Righteousness” in their lives. If you're still in Philippians 3, look at verse 12. Paul has already been justified.

Notice now his desire, “Not that I have already obtained *it* nor have already become perfect.”

He says, ‘I'm not like Jesus Christ entirely like I one day will be,’ but notice the image he uses; but in the meantime, “I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which I was also laid hold of by Jesus Christ.” What is that? To be like Christ, Christ-likeness. He uses a picture of a runner.

The wording here is like a marathon runner who is nearing the end of his course, and as he's running that course, he sees the finish line and he presses every muscle in his body, he stretches out toward that tape because he wants the prize. And Paul says, “That's the desire I have, to be like Jesus Christ” (Paraphrase). And if you're a Christian, that's your desire as well.

In fact, the opposite can never characterize a true Christian. Turn to 1 John, chapter 2; 1 John 2, verse 29, “If you know that He (Christ) is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness (as a pattern of life, that person) is born of Him (That is, of God.).” Go down to verse 7 of chapter 3:

Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness (that is, the one whose life is marked by an ongoing pattern of righteousness, that's how they live. Not that they don't sin, but righteousness characterizes their life rather than sin, that person) is righteous, just as He (Jesus) is righteous; the one who practices sin (that is, who in an ongoing way, with love and abandon, continues to live and pursue sin and not hate it, that person is in fact) is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared...to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin (like that, they don't live in ongoing, unrepentant sin.), because His (God's) seed abides (is) in him. (The Holy Spirit is there. He can't sin like that.) because he is (has been) born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God.

You see, the blessed person is in Jesus' spiritual kingdom and that person got in by desiring the imputed righteousness of justification. But the desire for righteousness doesn't stop there once you become a Christian. You want the personal righteousness of sanctification. You want to be righteous not only in your position before God, but in the practice of your life.

That's in the wording back in our text. That's how it's worded. Jesus said literally in Greek, He says, “Blessed are the ones who are hungering and the ones who are thirsting.” In other words, this consuming, compelling desire for righteousness is a never-ending reality in the life of a true

Christian. It's not something you manifest once at the beginning. This is what marks you your whole life. Matthew Henry explains and summarizes this righteousness that the true Christian hungers and thirsts for; he says, again, it's these two things, "First of all, you hunger and thirst for all of the spiritual blessings purchased for us by the righteousness of Christ (In other words, you desire imputed righteousness. And then he says.) and to have the whole man renewed in righteousness so as to become a new man" (You long for personal righteousness.). Leon Morris writes, "How could anyone have a strong desire for a right standing before God without, at the same time, strongly wanting to do the right?" So putting together then all we've learned, we can restate the Beatitude like this, "Blessed are all those who desire a legal standing of righteousness before God and who desire a personal character and conduct of righteousness, and they desire it like a starving man craves food and one dying of thirst craves water."

Now friends, this is a test. Remember, all the Beatitudes describe all true Christians. So this is a test of whether you are a Christian or not. Jesus said only those starving for righteousness truly belong to His spiritual kingdom, and only those dying of their thirst for righteousness know Him. By the way, let me just say that this desire is all-consuming. It doesn't stop short; it's not merely a desire to stop some dominating sin in your life. Listen, unbelievers often want to be free of an enslaving sin. That's why there are "Twelve-step Programs," and "Sex-addict Clinics." They don't want to be under the control of something; so they want to get rid of one sin. That's not what we're talking about. It doesn't mean you just want to be consistent in your spiritual disciplines like Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance, those are all good. But guess what? People in false religions and cults have those desires. It's not the desire to be forgiven but remain unchanged. Instead, don't look at those things; those are not what we're talking about. Instead, ask yourself and ask the Lord to show you whether you have a

consuming, overwhelming desire to have a right- standing before God based solely on the life and death of Jesus Christ, and you want to be personally righteous. Or let me put it another way, “Do you want more than anything else this morning to be holy? Do you want more than anything else in life to be like Jesus Christ?” If you do, then take heart because Jesus says, “If that marks you, then you're His; you are part of His kingdom because that's not natural.” Again, unbelievers may want to get rid of a sin here or there because they don't like the control or the shame of it or whatever. But they don't want to be like Jesus. Only a changed heart wants in every way to be like Him. Be encouraged!

If you say, “Tom, you know, as I think about this, this hunger and thirst for righteousness, that has been the pattern of my life for much of my life. But right now, as I sit here today, I've given in to sin, and I'm not repentant of that sin.” Listen, if that's you, you need to get serious. You need to get serious about your sin. You need to confess it. You need to forsake it. You need to turn from it, because if you don't, then you will either invite the discipline of God into your life, “Every son He loves, He disciplines,” or if you continue to live like that day in and day out and week in and week out and month in and month out and year in and year out, then you'll show that you were never a Christian at all. If you're here and you have to admit, as you think about this test, this Beatitude, “Tom, I've never had this desire, and I don't have this desire now,” then let me just say as kindly as I can to you that if Jesus Christ were here this morning looking you in the face, He would say, as He said on this occasion, “You don't belong to Me. You're not in My kingdom.” And for you, there's actually a pronouncement of judgment by Christ. Turn over to Luke, chapter 6, this is the parallel passage. And in Luke 6, He not only gives the blessings, He gives the Woes. Here's the corresponding woe, Luke 6:25, “Woe to you (that is judgment on you) who are well fed-now, for you shall be hungry.” What does Jesus mean? He's pronouncing

a judgment on those who think they're well-fed now. What is it to be well-fed now? It means one of two things. It either means, "You think you are righteous on your own merit; You think you're good enough for God." If that's what you think, you think you're well-fed, that's not true. Calvin says, "Hypocrites give themselves no concern about Christ because they are intoxicated with their own righteousness and neither hunger nor thirst for His grace." The other possibility, you may think you're well-fed but, in this sense, you may say, "I don't really care." Maybe you're sitting there going, "Look, I don't care about all this. When's it going to be over and I'm going to go home." That says a lot about your soul; it says you don't know Jesus Christ. Spurgeon said, "Unless our faith makes us pine after holiness and pant after conformity to God, it is no better than the faith of demons." Jesus says, "If either of those describes you, if you think you're well-fed because your own righteousness is good enough for God, or if you just don't care," Jesus says, "You're going to experience a different kind of hunger, and you're going to experience it forever." Jesus' warning here is a call for us to examine ourselves. Do we have a compelling hunger for righteousness, a desire to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of our own and a desire to be like Jesus Christ in our moral characters? So that's "The Obsession" of a true Christian. We've seen two specifics about the spiritual desire that marks every true Christian. We've seen "The Illustration." We've seen "The Obsession."

There's a third final detail that Jesus reveals in our text and that is "The Consummation" of the true Christian's desire. What is that consummation? "Eternal Fulfillment." Now, while it looks to eternity, Jesus begins by telling us that it's also "A Present Reality" to some extent. Look at verse 6. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." Again, Jesus proclaims that all who hunger and thirst for righteousness are already in His spiritual kingdom right now, they are blessed today. And if you're a true Christian, then there's a sense in which you are being

partially satisfied right now with righteousness. I mean, that's what He says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." I think that refers, at least in part, to our lives here. You see, right now and for the rest of our lives on this planet, you and I, and this is interesting to think about, you and I experience continually both on the one hand spiritual hunger, and on the other hand, partial spiritual fulfillment, partial spiritual satisfaction, both hunger and satisfaction.

You say, "Tom, how can that be? How can you both be hungry and satisfied at the same time?"

Well, I'm about to make some of you hungry, but it's like going to a Mexican restaurant when you're really hungry, and you sit down and pretty quickly they put a very large basket of tortilla chips there in the center of the table, and a couple of large cups of salsa. And you dive in, and you eat a number of those chips to, sort of immediately, satiate that driving hunger you feel.

And then for a couple minutes you feel satisfied. You stop eating for a moment, you talk to your friends, you carry on a conversation, but it only lasts for a few short minutes. And then you look down at that basket of chips again and you have a few more. And again, for a few minutes, that's enough. But if you're like me, that process continues until you've gone through a couple of baskets. That's how it works in this life. It's a cycle of hungering and being partially satisfied with the righteousness that we desire. Ken Hughes writes, "Our spiritual hunger now increases and intensifies in the very act of being satisfied. It just grows; we want more!" We are only partially satisfied with righteousness here. I mean, when I look at my life, by God's grace, I am not what I used to be. I am satisfied with that. But I am not at all what I want to be or what I one day will be. I'm not satisfied with that. And you're the same if you're in Christ.

So there is a "Present Reality" of this satisfaction, but that's not the main point. Jesus also promises all of His disciples "The Future Certainty" of righteousness. And this is his main point

in this Beatitude. Look at verse 6, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for (because) they shall be satisfied,” pointing to the future. The Greek word for ‘satisfied’ originally referred to ‘fattening an animal in a stall; putting it in a stall and just pumping it full of food.’ Then literally it came to mean ‘to be filled with food.’ And figuratively, used as it is here, it means ‘to experience inward satisfaction of soul,’ ‘to be satisfied in that sense.’ Jesus says, “Listen, if you're My follower, not only will you get the righteousness that you hunger and thirst for, but one day you'll be completely filled with it in Jesus' future kingdom.” Our desire for righteousness will be perfectly, completely satisfied!

Christian, think about this, eternally, your soul will be satisfied with the righteousness you desire. You will know in eternity that you have a righteous standing before God. You will never doubt it again. There will never be one shadow of doubt when you're in His presence. And, in that day, you will, in your moral character, you'll still be you, but you will be exactly, in your moral character, like Jesus Christ. Perfectly, forever, you will be satisfied! Think of it this way, eternally, your soul will experience the same level of spiritual satisfaction that your body does after that huge meal on Thanksgiving day—forever satisfied! Here's how it's described in Psalm 16:11, “In your presence, there is fullness of joy.” Fullness of joy; you can't get any more—it's completely satisfied! And “In your right hand, there are pleasures forever.”

What is that pleasure ultimately? It's righteousness. Psalm 17:15, “As for me, I shall behold Your face (God) in righteousness.” Not your righteousness, of course God is righteous, he says, “I shall behold Your face” when I am fully and completely righteous; “I will (shall) be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake,” that is, when I awake in your presence. Or it's like 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God.” that's true right now, still, “it has not appeared as yet what we will be. (But) We know that when He appears, we will be (What?) like Him,

because we will see Him just as He is.” That's your future. If you're a Christian right now, you have an intense craving to enjoy the benefit of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ and to have the personal righteousness that reflects His own moral character. And Jesus says, “If that's what your hunger and thirst is right now, Christian, you will be satisfied forever.”

Now, clearly, this Beatitude is crucial. I mean, only those who have this desire are in Jesus' spiritual kingdom and will be in His eventual kingdom. So how can you come to have this desire if you don't have it today? Well, let me just say, “It's not natural; nobody is born with this desire, and it's not self-created. You can't just decide you're going to hunger and thirst for righteousness; it doesn't work that way.” Remember, this is the same disciple, who in the first Beatitude, acknowledged their (his) spiritual bankruptcy, “I am nothing, I have nothing, I'm not righteous.” So how does this happen? Listen, it is by grace alone that God creates this desire in the heart. And He's the only one that can satisfy this desire by giving us the righteousness we desire. Notice those hungering and thirsting here, they don't achieve righteousness; they just hunger and thirst for it. And then God, by His grace, satisfies them. And Jesus is the source of that righteousness. 1 Corinthians 1:30, “Christ Jesus, who became to us (What?)...righteousness.” He is the righteousness. So cry out to God to give you this desire. Be like the tax collector in Jesus' story; cry out and say, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner,” because Jesus said that guy went home that very moment right with God, justified, declared right before God. A hunger and thirst for righteousness can only be satisfied in Jesus Christ, God's Son.

He's the only source where our spiritual thirst can be quenched and our spiritual hunger satisfied. Jesus, friends, is the only food that will satisfy your spiritual hunger. It's what He said, John 6:35, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who

believes in Me will never thirst.” Jesus is the only water that'll satisfy your spiritual thirst. John 7:37, Jesus cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.” If you're here this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ, let me tell you, you've spent your life looking to satisfy the hunger and thirst of your soul, and I can promise you, if you haven't found Christ, nothing you have found has done it. It hasn't satisfied you, and it won't. He's the only one who can.

The Bible ends with an invitation to you, friend, to all of those who have a consuming spiritual thirst to be right with God and then to be right. And it's an invitation to come to Jesus Christ so He can satisfy that thirst. Listen to how the Bible ends, Revelation 22:17, “The Spirit (that is the Holy Spirit) and the bride (that is the church, all believers) say, ‘come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty, come; let the one who wishes take of the water of life without cost.” Jesus paid the cost; all it will cost you is your sin and your self-rule. Come, come, and He'll satisfy your thirst. Jesus says, “Blessed are those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for they will be satisfied forever” (Literal translation).

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for our time, and thank You for the fact that You are the One, for those of us in Christ, You are the one who created in our souls that hunger and thirst.

And thank You, oh God, that by Your grace, You also have satisfied that hunger and thirst, partially here, but in Your presence and forever, perfect, eternal fulfillment and satisfaction. Father, we thank You for the promise our Lord makes here; encourage every true Christian. Lord, for those who confess Christ, and may very well be, but who right now are living in an unrepentant pattern of sin, help them to get serious about their sin, to see that if they continue,

they're inviting your discipline, if they are really Yours, or if it continues on, they'll show that they're not Yours at all. Lord, may this be the day they repent and turn back to You.

And Lord, I pray for those here who have to be honest; they've looked at this Beatitude and said, "That doesn't describe me at all." Lord, help them to be like the man in Your story, the Tax Collector; may they beat on their chest, call out to You, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." And may they, at that moment, experience that legal declaration in heaven that they are right with you because "Jesus paid it all." May that be true of them today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.