

I trust it goes without saying, that we all by nature seek happiness—some seek it in possessions or people, but we all without exception seek it in the created—but our text teaches us that happiness ought not be sought in and of itself—but is the result of a higher pursuit—“blessed [truly happy] are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...”—not, happy are those who hunger and thirst for happiness, but righteousness—happiness is the result of seeking righteousness and was never intended to be sought as an end in itself..

Martyn Lloyd-Jones—“Everybody wants to be happy. That is the great motive behind every act and ambition, behind all work and all striving and effort. Everything is designed for happiness. But the great tragedy of the world is that, though it gives itself to seek for happiness, it never seems to be able to find it...”

He then provides the reason—“We are not to hunger and thirst after blessedness; we are not to hunger and thirst after happiness. But that is what most people are doing. We put happiness and blessedness as the one thing that we desire, and thus we always miss it; it always eludes us. According to the Scriptures happiness is never something that should be sought directly; it is always something that results from seeking something else...”

Having considered poverty of spirit, gospel mourning and meekness, we come this morning to v6—“blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled...”—having been taught of their spiritual poverty, over which they mourn, this gives rise to a meekness that results in a gentle-humility before God and others, which in turn produces a longing for righteousness—in other words, having been emptied in the first three beatitudes, the kingdom dweller now longs for filling—“blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled...”

Before we come to our text, I want to say a word about the place this fourth beatitude plays in reference to those that follow—it has relation to those that preceded by way of contrast—having been emptied they are now filled—but it has relation to those that follow by way of overflow—having been filled in v6, verses 7-9 are the overflow of this filling—that is, we are enabled to be merciful, pure, and peacemakers as a result of being filled in v6...

- I. What is meant by hungering and thirsting?
- II. What is meant by righteousness?
- III. What is meant by fulfilled?

I. What is meant by hungering and thirsting?

1. I trust it's obvious that the spiritual hungering and thirsting of which our Savior speaks, is symbolic language for the longings and desires of the soul...
2. Both Greek words (translated hunger and thirst) refer to a deep and painful need—a desire that borders on desperation...
3. Thus to be specific—[1] it is a deep desire—a desire that originates within the deepest recesses of the soul...
4. Ps.42:1-2—“as the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God...”
5. Notice the two phrases—“my soul pants for you...my soul thirsts for God...”—David is here describing a spiritual longing or thirsting...
6. A desire that goes beyond the mere surface—a desire that originates from within the soul—a desire birthed from a felt need...
7. MacArthur—“This beatitude speaks about a strong desire. It speaks about a driving passion, a consummate ambition...those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Hungering and thirsting here communicate to us something of a deeply felt need...People who come into His kingdom and people who live in His kingdom are characterized by a certain kind of hunger and thirst. They have a strong desire. They are driven by a passionate ambition. They are on a very intense pursuit...”

8. Notice [2] it is a desperate desire—both Greek word rendered “hunger” refers to a starvation that results in desperation—a hunger that results in seeking...
9. Thus our Savior puts seeking for hungering in Matt.6:33—“but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”
10. Ps.63:1—“O God, you *are* my God; early will I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water...”
11. Consider [a] the reality of longing—“my soul thirsts for you; my flesh longs for you...”—his longing consumed his whole person—body and soul...
12. Consider [b] the reason for longing—“my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water...”
13. His soul longed for God—he was unable to satisfy his thirst in the things of this world—“a dry and thirsty land where there is no water...”
14. The imagery is that of a man in a dry and barren land—a desert void of water—a land that lacked anything that could truly satisfy...
15. Notice [c] the result of longing—“O God, you are my God; early I will seek you...”—because his soul longed for God he sought God...
16. The Hebrew word translated “early” in the old and new King James, refers to an earnest and diligent pursuit...
17. Thus its translated “earnest” by some translations—the idea is that, his earnest desire resulted in an early and diligent pursuit...
18. Thus gospel longing transcends mere talk but results in actions—for the soul knows how and where to satisfy itself...
19. What would you think of a man who complained about thirst, yet lay next to a pool of clear cool water unwilling to drink...
20. Such a man was either a fool or a liar—but not so with the blessed man, for his thirst drives him to the source of his filling...
21. It puts him on an earnest and diligent search—a Christian is a man in search of water and he knows where to find it...
22. Notice [3] it is a dominant desire—by this I mean it is a leading or overriding desire—one that prevails over all else...
23. While many desires may exist within the soul, hunger and thirst dominate all else—they are specific desires that demand attention...
24. For example, a man who is on the verge of starvation would not be satisfied with all gold or silver but only bread—only food...
25. Likewise our Savior refers to a specific and dominant desire—a hungering and thirsting after righteousness...
26. Oh my dear friends, are we those whom our Savior here describes—are we those who hunger and thirst after righteousness...

II. What is meant by righteousness?

1. The Scriptures use the concept of righteousness in various ways—here the options are two—[a] to an imputed righteousness, or [b] to an imparted righteousness...
2. Notice [a] an imputed righteousness—by this is meant a positional righteousness that is imputed to our spiritual account by faith...
3. Rom.10:4—“for Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes...”—Christ is the end or goal of righteousness for all who believe...
4. That is, it is through faith that Christ imputes His righteousness to our spiritual bank account—He declares us legally righteous...
5. Notice [b] an imparted righteousness—by this is referred to a practical righteousness that is put within us by the new birth...
6. Eph.4:24—“...put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness...”
7. The new man is recreated after the moral image of God—it is changed from being unrighteous to being righteous and holy...

8. The new man is righteous practically—he lives in a righteous manner—he loves and longs for righteousness or holiness...
9. This then brings us to an obvious question—which of these two does our Savior here refer to—an imparted or infused righteousness...
10. I suggest both—in fact the OT often uses the concept of righteousness as a synonym for salvation—which of necessity includes our justification and sanctification...
11. Isa.45:8—“rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it...”
12. Here the Lord foretells of gospel days—a day when His righteousness and salvation shall come—it shall come down from heaven...
13. This of course refers to Christ and His salvation—a salvation that will secure a perfect righteousness for our justification and a practical righteousness for our sanctification...
14. Isa.46:12-13—“listen to Me, you stubborn-minded, who are far from righteousness. I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off; and My salvation will not delay. And I will grant salvation in Zion, and My glory for Israel...”
15. Thus when our Savior speaks of the blessed man as hungering and thirsting for [or after] righteousness—he refers both to an imputed and imparted righteousness...
16. Or perhaps I can put it this way—to hunger and thirst after righteousness is to long for God’s salvation in its fullest sense...
17. Martyn Lloyd-Jones—“...the desire for righteousness, the act of hungering and thirsting for it, means ultimately the desire to be free from sin in all its forms and in its every manifestation...”
18. But to be specific, to hunger and thirst after righteousness entails three things—[1] to esteem a positional righteousness...
19. This relates back to the poverty of spirit—having seen ourselves empty of any personal righteousness, the soul now longs for an external or foreign righteousness...
20. Phil.3:7-9—“but what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith...”
21. Here is a man who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness—a man who is esteeming the righteousness of Christ as His greatest desire...
22. Notice [2] to pursue a practical righteousness—2Tim.2:22—“flee...youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness...”
23. Through the new birth the Holy Spirit imparts or communicates a righteous nature that now longs for and pursues righteous living...
24. Ps.119:20—“my soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times...” v40—“behold, I long for your precepts; revive me in your righteousness.
25. Thus here we come to a mark of true religion—a truly blessed man is a man of desperation—a man who is desperate for righteousness...
26. A man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness and is willing to do what it takes to have it—even if this entails cutting off right hands and gouging out right eyes...
27. In fact I go further and suggest that you can judge your present spiritual health based upon your present appetite for righteousness...
28. For example, whenever I have a cold I never eat—my appetite is non-existent—I can go days without eating...
29. And so it is—when a soul is sickly it has little if any spiritual appetite—oh it may have an appetite for other things—but not for righteousness...
30. Notice [3] to anticipate a perfect righteousness—this of course refers to what we commonly refer to as glorification—when we shall be both positionally and practically perfectly righteous...
31. And thus a spiritually healthy soul—one that hungers and thirsts after righteousness will not be content with its present level or holiness...

32. It will long for a day when it shall be wholly righteousness—when it will be free from all remaining unrighteousness...
33. Rom.8:22-23—“for we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body...”

III. What is meant by fulfilled?

1. The Greek word translated “fulfilled” by the NKJV literally means—“to be fatten, filled, or satisfied”—it here refers to a filling unto satisfaction...
2. This word is almost exclusively used of a physical fulness, Mark 6:42—“so they all ate and were filled...”—our Savior here uses it of a spiritual filling or satisfaction—the one who longs for righteousness will be filled or satisfied...
3. Let me suggest three things about the timing of this filling—[1] there is a present filling or satisfaction that is the result of our justification...
4. Rom.5:1—“therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...”
5. This is the kind of satisfaction that Augustine spoke of when he said—“The heart of man is restless until it finds its rest in Thee...”
6. We might refer to this filling as the satisfying of the conscience—the provision of an inner peace and calm that results from making peace with God...
7. Oh my friends how restless a soul is until it hungers and thirsts for God—what a tragedy it is that native man has no sense of need for something outside of itself...
8. Thus Luke records our Savior as saying Lk.6:21,25—“blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. [But] woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger...”
9. Woe to you who are presently full of your own righteousness and thus have no need of an external or foreign righteousness...
10. Oh but in contrast—“blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled...”—they shall have the peace that accompanies a justifying righteousness...
11. Notice [2] there is a progressive filling—this takes place throughout our lives in proportion to our hungering and thirsting after righteousness...
12. Ps.34:8-10—“oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! 9 Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing...”
13. Ps.132:13-15—“for the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired *it* for His dwelling place: 14 "This *is* My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. 15 I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread...”
14. Notice [3] there is a perfect filling—this takes place in heaven, when our souls shall be perfectly and eternally satisfied...
15. Ps.17:13-15—“arise, O LORD, Confront him, cast him down; Deliver my life from the wicked with Your sword, 14 With Your hand from men, O LORD, From men of the world *who have* their portion in *this* life, And whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure. They are satisfied with children, and leave the rest of their *possession* for their babes. 15 As for me, I will see your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness...”
16. This passage contrasts two kinds of people—there are the wicked or cursed of God and the righteous or blessed of God...
17. They are described by their desires—what it is that satisfies them—notice [a] the wicked, v14—“they are satisfied with children...”
18. Notice [b] the righteous, v15—“but as for me, I will see your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness...”
19. There is a sense in which the righteous are never fully satisfied until that glorious morning—that morning when they shall awake fully and perfectly righteous...
20. Rev.7:16-17—“they shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes...”