

If I were to boil down the indispensable moral virtues or character traits of a true Christian—things that are necessarily true of every Christian regardless of when or where they lived what would they be—I suggest to you that fewer portions of God’s word would better serve our purposes than Matt.5:3-12—what does every member of His kingdom look like—what character traits are common to each one without a single exception—they are poor in spirit, mourn over their sins, meek, hunger and thirst after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, and are persecuted by an unthankful and wicked world—these are those who are presently and eternally blessed...

Having considered this verse in a broader sense, it is my intention this week to apply it with a more narrow focus—but before I do that I want to review what we have seen thus far—if you recall we considered this text byway of three questions—[1] what is meant by “hungering and thirsting”—which I suggested refers to a deep, desperate, and dominate desire or longing of a man’s soul, [2] what is meant by “righteousness”—wherein I suggested that in the broadest sense our Savior refers to the whole of God’s salvation including an imputed and imparted righteousness, or to be more specific I suggested to hunger and thirst after righteousness entailed three things—[a] to esteem a positional righteousness, [a] to pursue a practical righteousness, [c] to anticipate a perfect righteousness, and then [3] what is meant by “filled”—wherein I suggested there is [a] a present filling or satisfaction associated with our justification, [b] a progressive filling associated with our sanctification, and [c] a future filling associated with our glorification...

But if you recall last week while I preferred to interpret the text in its widest sense, understood in a more narrow sense the righteousness after which the blessed hunger and thirst is largely the practical righteous of a holy life—a life characterized by righteous and holy living...

- I. The Marks of Spiritual Hunger
- II. The Means for spiritual Hunger
- III. The Motives to Spiritual Hunger

#### I. The Marks of Spiritual Hunger

##### A. A distrust of our native righteousness

1. A sure sign that we are hungering and thirsting after God’s righteousness is that we are increasingly disgusted with our own...
2. By this I mean—we are increasingly aware how our own native righteousness lacks any merit or value with reference to our standing before God...
3. Isa.64:6—“but we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags...”—not only are our sins filthy but our best deeds and works...
4. This has reference to our own native or natural righteousness—our own works considered in and of themselves...
5. If we were to take our best work—our most righteous deed—and we were to compare it with the perfect standard of God’s law—it would be found incomplete...
6. This of course does not deny that a Christian can and does perform good works—works that God rejoices in and rewards us for...
7. But these works are not the basis for our acceptance with God but are the evidences of our acceptance—they in themselves merit nothing...
8. Thus a Christian is one who has been taught that his best deeds are insufficient to merit God’s acceptance and forgiveness...
9. And the more he matures the more he distrusts his own righteousness—the more he sees the folly of putting his hope in his own works...
10. Martyn Lloyd-Jones—“We are not hungering and thirsting after righteousness as long as we are holding with any sense of self-satisfaction to anything that is in us, or to anything that we have ever done. The man

who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is the man who knows what is it to say with Paul, ‘In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing...’”

#### B. A dissatisfaction of our present righteousness

1. Here I refer to the present level of our practical righteousness or holiness—the present degree of our sanctification...
2. A person who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness is one who’s ever striving for higher levels of personal righteousness...
3. There is a holy discontentment within them concerning their present condition—they want more, they long for more...
4. Phil.3:13-14—“brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus...”
5. Here we find a description of a blessed man—one who is hungering and thirsting after ever higher levels of sanctification...
6. Notice [1] there is forgetting, v13a—“I do no count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind...”
7. The apostle understood that he has yet to arrive—while he was not what he was he understood he is not yet what he will...
8. And—he was not yet what he wanted to be—“but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind...”
9. Gill—“...though he was thankful for these things...yet he did not trust in them: nor was he satisfied with what he had attained unto...”
10. Notice [2] there is reaching and pressing, vv13b-14—“and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal...”
11. Here the imagery is that of “striving or stretching forward”—it entails conscious and vigorous effort—a pressing forward with the whole man...
12. Thus a person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness possess a holy discontentment concerning his present level of righteousness...
13. He is always striving after higher levels of sanctification—he isn’t content with the statuesque—but he has a higher standard and goal...
14. This is what worries me about some of us—I see so precious little reaching and pressing after the goal—remember—“those who judge themselves by themselves are not wise...”
15. What happens is that we look around us at the sorry state of Christendom—and in comparing ourselves to it we think we’re doing pretty good...
16. But my friends, let us not judge ourselves by an apostate and indifferent age, but instead let us compare ourselves to the word of God...
17. And if you or I were to compare ourselves to the high standard of God’s word, I assure you, not one of us will be content with our present level of righteousness...

#### C. A deepening pleasure in the nature of righteousness

1. A sure sign of spiritual hunger is a deepening pleasure in the nature of righteousness and here I specifically refer to the practical righteousness of a holy life...
2. A hungering soul sees an intrinsic beauty in a righteous and holy life—a beauty in which we find delight and joy...
3. My friend, can you say with judgment day honesty—that fewer things bring more pleasure to your souls than viewing righteousness in others and experiencing it in ourselves...

#### D. A willingness to do what it takes to obtain righteousness

1. In other words—if we are truly hungering and thirsting after righteousness we will of necessity be willing to do and go where it is necessary to obtain righteousness...

2. For example, think of a man about to die of hunger—who hears of a place that possess an abundance of food...
3. But in order to get there he is forced to tread through dangerous and difficult terrain—if he is truly hungry he will be willing to endure such things...
4. So too—a Christian is one who knows where true meat and drink is at—and he is committed to get there at all cost...
5. To be specific [1] they are willing to receive correction—a person who is hungering for righteousness will sit themselves under a faithful ministry...
6. There are many people who profess to hunger and thirst after righteousness but refuse to sit beneath a faithful preaching ministry...
7. They get easily offended when the preaching challenges their present level of righteousness—they don't want their boat to be rocked...
8. It always worries me when people are comfortable in places where the word of God is not faithfully preached and practiced...
9. But my friends, when your soul begins to hunger and thirst after righteousness, you wont be content for such things...
10. Let me put it plainly—professing Christians who look for churches with the shortest sermons—that fail to challenge them—are not hungering and thirsting after righteousness...
11. Churches filled with people who want just enough religion to satisfy their consciences—who minimize their religious activities to one hour on Saturday night or Sunday morning...
12. Such people as these know nothing of deep and desperate hungering that our Savior here describes as blessed...
13. Notice [2] they are willing to mortify corruption—they are willing to cut of right hands and gouge out right eyes...
14. A hungry and thirsty soul is willing to get up early to be present for SS class—and to be out late to attend mid-week prayer meetings...

## II. The Means for spiritual Hunger

### A. Empty your soul

1. By this I mean we must empty our souls of all that would hinder our hunger—of things that would erode our spiritual appetites...
2. Prov.27:7—“a satisfied [full] soul loathes the honeycomb, but to a hungry soul every bitter thing *is* sweet...”
3. I do not deny the probability that this Proverb has its primary reference to physical hunger—but what is true physically in this case is true spiritually...
4. Consider [a] a fulness—“a satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb...”—the word translated “satisfied” by the NKJV refers to a person whose stomach is gorged...
5. Such a person will even hate the honeycomb—something that is normally considered very pleasant and desirable...
6. The point being—when the stomach is full nothing looks appealing—well I trust the application I am anxious to make is obvious...
7. When we have gorged our souls with other things, even righteousness, something that would normally look sweet, seems unappealing...
8. This sad realty is fully true of the unconverted—who has filled himself with the temporal possessions of this life—and thus looks with loathing upon the gospel...
9. But this principle is true of Christians as well—who at times eat too much of things of this world and thus hinder their appetite...
10. For example, our 2 year old has learned where we stash the crackers and pretzels that he snacks on between meals...
11. And the full-proof way we can know he's gotten into them, is that he has little or no appetite when it comes to dinner...

12. Why because he has already filled himself with cookies and crackers—and thus as a result, has no appetite for the meal...
13. So too—we fill ourselves with other things and so eat little of our prepared meals—and thus loath the sweetness of God’s holy word...
14. Consider [b] a hunger—“but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet...”—the point being, when the stomach is empty everything looks good...
15. Have you ever gone grocery shopping on an empty stomach—everything looks good—even the ketchup and mustard...
16. So too—when we are spiritual hunger—every sermon sounds good—every doctrine is appealing—and ever word of Scripture sweeter than honey from the honeycomb...
17. Notice [1] you must empty your soul of sinful things—by this of course I refer to those things that are unlawful...
18. Such things must be vomited out if spiritual hunger is to be revived—we must put away any and every activity that would hinder our appetites...
19. 1Pet.2:1-3—“therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious...”
20. Consider three things—[a] there is a need for emptying, v1—“therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking...”
21. Consider [b] there is the reality of thirsting, v2—“desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby...”
22. Consider [c] there is prior tasting, v3—“if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious [or good]...”—the point being—present thirsting presupposes previous drinking...
23. Notice [2] you must empty your soul of excessive things—here I refer to those things that may not be sinful in themselves but are indulged in excessively...
24. Such indulgence erodes our appetites and hinders our hunger—for example, surfing the internet, reading secular books, TV, secular radio or music...
25. My friends, too much of these things and your soul will loath the honeycomb—and you will not hunger and thirst for righteousness...
26. For example—most of you know I recently spent a few days with some family members—and all they do all day long is watch television...
27. From morning to nighttime the TV is on—and the things they watch are not openly profane and immoral—but news—secular and liberal news...
28. And do you know how this affected me—I left with my soul full of the cookies and crackers of this world—and I did not hunger and thirst after righteousness...
29. Martyn Lloyd-Jones—“I suggest that if we are truly hungering and thirsting after righteousness we shall not only avoid things that we know to be bad and harmful, we shall even avoid things that tend to dull or take the edge off our spiritual appetites. There are so many things like that, things that are quite harmless in themselves and which are perfectly legitimate. Yet if you find that you are spending much of your time with them, and that you desire the things of God less, you must avoid them...”
30. Notice [3] you must empty your soul of questionable things—here I refer to anything that didn’t neatly fit under the previous two points...
31. Things that to some degree trouble our conscience, and if we were honest with ourselves are things we know we should stop...
32. Rom.14:22—“happy is he who does not condemn himself in that thing which he allows...”—in other words, doesn’t act against his conscience...

## B. Exercise your soul

1. Here I refer to the need to positively foster within us an intensified spiritual hunger—to put it plainly—a lazy and sickly soul is not a hungry and thirsty soul...
2. The apostle exhorted Timothy in 1Tim.4:7—“exercise yourself toward godliness...”—or we could say—exercise yourself toward righteousness...

3. Thus our degree of hungering will be in direct proportion to our use of various disciplines intended to exercise our souls...
4. Notice [1] Bible reading—Bible reading is not only an indication or evidence of hunger but also a means to it...
5. Let me put it this way—eating begets hunger—let me illustrate—yesterday during supper Mikey was refusing to eat his mash-potatoes...
6. And what my wife did was put a spoonful within his mouth—and at first he tried to spit it out, but before he did he got a little taste of it...
7. And what happened—his eyes brightened and he straightened up, and before you knew his appetite was revived...
8. So too—the word of God is food for our souls—and what is often needed is but a taste of its sweetness to beget or revive a hunger and thirst...
9. Notice [2] fellowship—that is, associate with other hungering Christians, Prov.13:20—“he who walks with wise men will be wise...”—or—he who walks with the hungry will be made hungry...
10. One of the most useful means to beget a spiritual hunger within my soul, is to read biographies of Christian men and women...
11. Those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness—those who longed for God with every fiber of their being...
12. Notice [3] prayer—oh my friends, we must forever remember that hungering and thirsting after righteousness is the work of God’s Spirit within our hearts...
13. Thus we must plead with God that He would create within us a deep and desperate longing within our souls...
14. We must pray the words of the old hymn—“Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up, Lord! Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more. Fill me cup, fill it up and make me whole...”

### III. The Motives to Spiritual Hunger

#### A. Hungering and thirsting leads to filling

1. If you recall last week I sought to address the timing of this filling—it has present, progressive, and future applications...
2. But here I want to close our study of this text by briefly opening up the nature of this filling—or better yet—with what does God fill us with...
3. We read in Ps.107:9—“He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness...”—or with every good thing...
4. To be specific [1] He fills us with grace, Rom.15:13—“...may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace...”
5. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled with—“the fruits of righteousness”—such as love, joy, peace, and goodness...
6. Perhaps we could put it like this—he who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will find it, Ps.37:4—“delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart...”
7. When the Holy Spirit of God sets a soul a hungering and thirsting after righteousness He doesn’t send them on a fool’s errand...
8. Notice [2] He fills us with Christ, Ps.105:40—“He...satisfied them with the bread of heaven...”—this has reference to the manna from heaven...
9. The nation of Israel was filled throughout their wilderness journey with an abundance of bread that came down from heaven...
10. What did the manna typify—Christ—just as He satisfied His old covenant people with the bread of heaven so He satisfied every new covenant believer with true bread from heaven—Christ...
11. Jn.6:32—“Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven...”
12. But what does it mean to be filled with Christ—but to be satisfied with Christ—to have Him in such a way that you want or need nothing more...

13. Oh my dear friends—why should we hunger and thirst after righteousness, but because we will be filled—we will be satisfied with Christ...
14. This is the intended end of our hungering—that we might feast more fully upon the Lamb—that we might be satisfied with honey from the Rock...
15. Notice [3] He fill us with Himself, Eph.3:19—“that you may be filled with all the fullness of God...”—and who can fully explain these words...
16. What does it mean to be—“filled with all the fullness of God...”—but it at least means—to be filled with the love and presence of God...
17. Oh my friends why would we drink from broken cisterns—cisterns that can hold no water—let us hunger and thirst after that which can truly satisfy the soul...
18. Let us empty our souls of all that would hinder or erode our spiritual appetites—may we exercise our souls to excite them unto a fervent hungering and thirsting...
19. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled—filled with grace, Christ, and God Himself...

#### B. Hungering and thirsting leads to happiness

1. Let me suggest two reasons—hungering and thirsting leads to happiness [1] because it leads to righteousness—only the holy are happy...
2. By nature man seeks happiness in all the wrong places—but true and lasting happiness is only found in the righteousness or salvation of God...
3. But hungering and thirsting leads to happiness [2] because it increases our assurance—and the more we hunger after it the more assured we will be...
4. Do you know why some of us know so precious little of true happiness—because he know so precious little of hungering and thirsting...
5. CHS—“Physicians will tell you that they regard a good appetite as being one of the signs that a man’s body is in a healthy state, and it is the same with the soul. Oh, to have a ravenous appetite after Christ! Oh, to be greedy after the best things! Oh, to be covetous after holiness—in fact, to hunger and thirst after everything that is right, and good, and pure, and lovely, and of good report...”