

A Longing for What is Right

Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Intro: How much do you really want goodness in your life?

I. What is Righteousness?

A. Righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) = equity, justice, being right.

1. It's whatever conforms to the revealed will of God - what you have in your Bible.
2. It then came to mean "the result of obedience to God's will."
3. ILL: The Lord Submitting to Baptism. Matt 3:15 - Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."
4. Matt 6:1 - "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."
 - a. What are these "acts of righteousness"?
 - b. Answer: Doing what God wants done!
5. So this finally came to mean, "doing it right", "doing right things" & "being right" based on your conduct & attitudes.

B. What degree of righteousness is acceptable to God?

1. When you measure a relationship to God on the basis of living a good life, what's the standard?
 - a. In the Army, regulations describe the standard for any official tasking.
 - b. Soldiers are to accomplish the task "to standard" - do it the right way (according to regulation).
2. What's the standard for salvation & entrance into heaven?
 - a. When asked about salvation, many believe God operates on the merit/demerit system - as long as you're not a crook God will accept you!
 - b. But God's word says, For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. Matt 5:20.
 - c. To the average guy in Jewish culture, that meant perfection!
 - a. Pharisees made a point of teaching that righteousness meant dressing the right way, doing the right things, using the right language, etc.
 - b. The common guy just kinda gave up on all that.
 - d. According to Lord Jesus, the standard was perfect obedience! Matt 5:18-19 - I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

C. So - does the Bible exclude everybody from being saved?

1. Yes it does - if you try it on your own efforts!
2. No it doesn't - if you rely on the cross for your salvation!

- a. Lord Jesus made the difference between your imperfection & God's perfect standards when He died on the cross! **1 Cor 5:21 - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**
- b. When you surrender your life to Jesus & identify with Him, His righteousness becomes your righteousness & (presto!) you're righteous!
3. God now wants to begin changing you by building His righteousness into you.
 - a. God wants to begin molding you into His image. **Eph 2:10 - For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**
 - b. The question, then, is how badly do you want to be molded? How badly do you really want to be good?

II. What Does It Mean to Hunger and Thirst?

A. Let's look at hunger.

1. Lord Jesus fasted 40 days. He was really hungry when the devil tempted Him! (**Matt 4:1-11**)
2. An average person can go without food for 9 to 10 weeks as long as they have water.
3. You may have hunger pains occasionally - but a person in Bangladesh may be hungry all the time!
4. I have a health drink for breakfast - so if lunch is late I'm really craving food.
5. Do you crave living a pleasing life before God that much?

B. Let's look at thirst.

1. **ILL: "The Lady Be Good" - crew dying of thirst in the Sahara desert.** You can only survive 3 days without water!
2. When you're really thirsty, doesn't that first gulp of water taste wonderful?
3. God wants you to crave His righteous life like you thirst for water!

C. God wants you, also, to be the salt of the earth to others. **Matt 5:13 - You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.**

1. Salt creates thirst doesn't it?
2. What does that say about what the righteousness in your life can mean to others?

III. What Does It Mean to Be Filled?

A. When you live the life God created you to live, you become fulfilled!

B. You fulfill one of God's purposes for your life. **Rom 12:1-2 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

C. You get meaning, purpose, peace - all the elements in life God designed for you to have!

What is your attitude concerning righteousness? Is it what can I get away with in my life & still squeak into heaven? Are you trying to play games with God? Come on - get real! Hunger & thirst for a righteous life pleasing to Lord Jesus!