

Beatitudes: Pursuing Righteousness

Matthew 5:6

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TRANSCRIPT:

Gospel of Matthew Chapter 5, I'd like us to read together this morning from verse 1 through to verse 12. Hopefully, reading this week to week will cause you to memorize it, but we'll continue to do that so that we can meditate upon God's Word. Matthew chapter 5, beginning at verse number 1:

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'"

Let us pray. Lord, we acknowledge that Your Word is truth. We confess You this morning to be the God of truth. We pray, Lord God, that You would send the Spirit of truth to minister to our hearts the Word of God, that You might sanctify us, that You might strengthen us, that You might teach us of Your law, that we might love You and serve You day by day, and with each passing moment may we worship the God who has saved us. And we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Last week we considered verse number five of the Beatitudes which says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." We considered that meekness is that tameness of spirit that really finds its tameness in the confidence in the sovereignty of God. Understanding that God is in control, it seeks not to take its own control but rather yields itself to God's rule and submits to God's instruction, and then is marked by, if we could say, a

calmness of spirit rather than an agitated pride and arrogance and anger. And we considered how the meek are the ones that inherit the earth, and although that seems so back to front in the world, this is how it is in God's economy, that God gives the earth to the meek so that they will rule and reign with Christ forever, even though they themselves have not by force taken the world into their own hands and tried to set up their own kingdom here.

And now we come to a consideration of the next Beatitude which is to be found in verse number six, which reads, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." And here we are taught of the believer's attitude to righteousness, and this text is very fundamental to the understanding of blessedness as it relates to righteousness, and why I say it's so fundamental because it takes us back, at least in my mind, to Adam and Eve when they, in their original righteousness, experienced the blessedness of fellowship with God before sin disrupted all blessedness. And so, in one way, what we see from this text of Scripture is that blessedness, although disrupted by unrighteousness, may be entered into and experienced more fully through righteousness restored to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. And God restores us to righteousness in His Son, and God blesses His people with righteousness, and also commands us to walk in a life of righteousness so that we might continue on in this blessing.

What's interesting to note is that the world around us is looking for blessedness; they are looking for happiness, they are looking for satisfaction, they are looking for things in the world that would settle the agitations of their own hearts. But the Bible, and in this passage particularly, connects our blessedness to righteousness, and as the world seeks happiness, the last place they usually look for it is in righteousness. If they go to seek it in righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, and they do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. But most people look for blessedness or a sense of happiness and peace and calm and resolve in their life and confidence about the meaning and purpose of life in all the wrong places. But here the Bible tells us that the blessed one is the one who pursues righteousness and hungers after and thirsts after righteousness.

It was Augustine who said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." I think that he's so true, isn't it? God has made us for Himself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee. And the restlessness of the heart of man that must be resolved can only be resolved by God, but it is resolved by God through righteousness. For it is sin that has become the great disruptor of man's blessedness, and it is until sin is dealt with that we will once again experience the blessedness of communion and fellowship with God, for which

end man was made.

So true happiness is not to be sought out directly. If you haven't noticed already, that the blessed ones here are not pursuing blessedness or they're not pursuing happiness; they're pursuing the things that of which happiness is a byproduct. And so as man pursues righteousness, God marks that man as a blessed man, and the blessing of God rests upon that person. And so as a man or woman pursues meekness, so God blesses them in their meekness. But it's interesting to pursue happiness as an end in itself is not what Scripture instructs us to do. In fact, that is what the world teaches that we should do.

Now, what is this righteousness that Jesus is referring to here in this passage? He says very plainly, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." Well, I will just establish first and foremost that I do not believe that this is referring to justification as it is imputed to us. Although a man's blessedness rests on the righteousness of Christ, we must realize that this is not referring to sinners here but to the disciples of Jesus Christ. And so He is not telling them to pursue justification, for they have already been justified as their father Abraham by faith in the promised one, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so I don't believe that He is, although it is true of righteousness that those ones that are that have justification are truly blessed as we can see in Psalm 32 and other places, I don't believe that this is what Jesus is encouraging His disciples to do, to pursue justification. This pursuit is for believers, and not only is it for believers, the Bible teaches us that it's continual, and that's what the word hunger and thirsting is after; it's a continual hunger and a continually thirsting, which we do not do for justification.

This is a pathway that Jesus is laying out here that marks those who are already part of the kingdom of God, those who have already been justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, justification is a gift received at a point in time by faith. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness," but the holiness that is talked of here, or righteousness that is talked of here, is a pursuit of righteousness, something that is that we can never, if we could say, get enough of. Something that we are told to continually pursue and to long for and to seek after, and therefore it cannot be anything else but moral righteousness. A moral righteousness which is more to be understood in our sanctification. This is the righteousness of God being imparted to us, worked out in our lives by His grace day by day as He conforms us more and more to the image of His dear Son. This is the moral righteousness of which the Bible also does say, "Without holiness, no man will see the Lord," and it's important to realize this because our faith is not a faith that does not produce a life of works and of obedience and of holiness. For any man to declare justification by faith and

then to proceed to live in a life of sin, that person is deceived. They have not truly believed by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ because the faith that justifies begins this work of sanctification that continues to make us more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's important to understand that, that there is this positional righteousness where we stand before God redeemed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet we all know that we are not perfect. Don't have to take very long. If you're married, just ask your wife. If you have children, just ask your children. If you have parents, just ask them. If you have friends, just ask them. We may be seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places. We may be regarded right now as perfect in the sight of God because of the finished work of Christ upon the cross, but the truth is that we must continue to grow in grace to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that's what we are by position in Christ shall be what we become in time as we are sanctified. As the Bible says, there'll come a day when we will see Him, and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

So this moral righteousness is what Jesus is referring to here, a conformity to Christ, a pursuit of a pathway of holiness which the disciples are to hunger and thirst after. And what is this in a more practical way? Well, this righteousness and holiness must obviously refer to the things that Jesus has already told us. This righteousness looks like meekness. This righteousness looks like the poorness of spirit. This righteousness looks like mourning over sin. It looks like being merciful. It looks like living a life of purity of heart and being a peacemaker. It is not that we get to define what righteousness looks like and set up our own legalistic standards of what it means to be holy. God Himself tells us and commands us the pathway in which we should live as His people and what is to be regarded really as holy. You see them there in this passage, but beyond even what is in this passage, the moral righteousness could be referring to all the will of God. Not just what He has outlaid here, but we need to hunger and thirst after all the will of God. You remember the Lord Jesus Christ when He was about to be baptized by John in the Jordan River. And John says, "Oh, You should be baptizing me, not me You." And Jesus says, "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." What is He saying? It is becoming of us as God's people, as those that are obedient to the will of God, to fulfill all the will of God. And this is the righteousness which is referred to here in this passage.

Now, that is not referring to the fact that Jesus had to become more holy. You understand that He was without sin, but nonetheless, He walked on the pathway of righteousness and submission perfectly to the will of God, which is the path we also are to tread. And so here in this passage of Scripture, we are introduced to a moral righteousness which is to be seen in our lives and which we are to be pursuing after. And Jesus goes on to describe,

and what He emphasizes here is not a particular nature of righteousness, but He's trying to emphasize our attitude as believers toward righteousness.

And look what He says there in verse number six of the passage, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." You see, what Jesus wants His disciples to understand is that they, as believers in Christ, should be marked by a certain hunger and a certain thirst for holiness, for righteousness, for obedience to all the will of God. And the hunger and thirst here, as I said, is continual. And the fact that He mentions not just hunger but He mentions thirst is almost as a way of emphasis. I mean, they both are referring to the same thing, although they are different, but Jesus—they mean the same thing metaphorically. To hunger and to thirst is just a way of doubly emphasizing the intensity of the desire of this kind of pursuit.

You see, Jesus says here they are blessed, the ones that hunger continually and intensely, if we could say, after righteousness. One thing that is true about hunger is that when you become really hungry, you experience hunger pains. And those hunger pains bother you and don't really leave you until you satisfy that hunger, until you eat something. And there's an intensity about hunger pains. There's an intensity about thirsting and hungering after. There's a continual desire, and if we could say, pursuit, a longing is what Jesus is referring to here.

Jesus is trying to tell His disciples is that I want you to be a people, and you should be marked as a people, as My disciples, that pursue, that long after, that desire, that display earnestness, that have a yearning in your heart, a kind of seeking after righteousness. This is seen for us in Psalm 42, where the sons of Korah say there, "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so my soul longs after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I appear before God?" You see that there, there's a hungering and a thirsting, and he gives the illustration of a deer that's been perhaps running, and he's panting, and just, "I want water, I'm thirsty," and goes to the lake or to the river to have a drink, and the psalmist says, "My heart is the same way, O God. I thirst for You. I'm like a traveler in a weary land that longs for water. I want to satisfy my soul in You." It's a thirst, it's a yearning, it's a crying out for.

That is referred to in this passage, and this is what Jesus wants to reemphasize to His disciples, that you are to have, as My people, a thirst, a continual thirst after all My will. The psalmist says in Psalm 119:131, "I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for Your commandments. Look upon me and be merciful to me, as Your custom is toward those who love Your name. Direct my steps by Your word, and let not iniquity have do-

minion over me." What is the psalmist saying here? He says, "God, I'm like that deer that doesn't just pant after You, but panting after You looks like panting after Your commandments. I long to know Your will. I long to know Your way. I want Your words to dwell richly in my heart. I desire Your truth that I might obey it."

Now, he realizes that he has not in his own strength the power to do this alone, so he also begs God, and he says, "God, look upon me, help me, direct my steps. Where? How do you want me to direct your steps? According to Your word, O God, because I long for Your word, and I want to live a life consistent and in harmony with Your will. I want to live a life that reflects the word of truth and holiness which You have spelled out for us in Your law." This is the attitude of the psalmist. He realizes that he needs the assistance of God, but he sees his hunger, he pants, he longs, but then he says, "God, look on me, look on me, direct me, and let not iniquity have power over me."

He says in the same chapter, in verse 120, "My soul breaks with longing for Your judgments at all times." My soul breaks for the longing of Your judgments. The judgments is a synonym for the Word of God, or for the law of God, or for His statutes, or His commandments, and this is another synonym that reflects that, "Your judgments," and he says, "My heart breaks for longing for Your commandments, for Your judgments." Psalm 119:40 says, "Behold, I long for Your precepts." Same thing, another synonym there, "Revive me in Your righteousness."

What do we see in David? What we see in David is a man whose heart is after God's own heart, and what that looks like is a desire, a thirsting, a hungering of all the will of God to be filled in his life, that he might live according to God's commandments. A constant hunger, he says, "I hunger for Your judgments at all times." As the hymn writer put in the hymn, "O to Be Like Thee," the hymn writer says, "O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer, this is my constant longing and prayer. Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures, Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear. O to be like Thee, O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art. Come in my sweetness, come in my fullness, stamp Thine own image deep on my heart." Is what I'm saying here, constantly, this is my constant longing in prayer. What is your constant longing in prayer? Is what Jesus is saying to His disciples, it should be that you would be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and be a disciple of His who pursues the righteousness of God and seeks to be holy and pursues a life of holiness.

A constant hunger. The smallest mammal in America is called the American pygmy shrew, and the American pygmy shrew is the smallest mammal in America, weighing 3.4 grams, very small, very cute. But not only is it

the smallest of all the mammals in America, it is also the most hungriest. The American pygmy shrew, its heartbeat races at about an average of a thousand beats per minute, and it needs to eat three times its body weight daily to survive. Now, this is the American pygmy, and that simply means with this kind of constitution, it has to eat every 15 to 30 minutes, or else it will die. If it goes without food for an hour, the American pygmy is finished, done, dies. They don't live very long, they don't sleep very much, as you can imagine, so it seeks out prey all the time, and it every 15 to 30 minutes needs to eat. This is the American pygmy shrew, the smallest but yet the most hungriest of all the mammals in America.

And the Christian is to be very much like the American pygmy shrew, who has this constant cycle of hunger and filling, hunger and filling, hunger and filling, hunger and filling. And this little 3.4 gram mammal that just keeps on eating, eating, eating, can't get 15 minutes, an hour, it's gone, so has to keep going every 15 minutes. It's a good picture of what Jesus wants His disciples to be in terms of their hungering after righteousness, that there should be a continual pursuit for this hungry righteousness of God to be fulfilled in us. And this is what Jesus wants His disciples to have, a life marked by continuousness of hunger and a pursuit and a longing, and then a filling that follows. And this is the Christian life. This is what the Christian life should be. Our lives should be constantly marked by a desire to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Our lives should be marked by a continual hunger and thirst and pursuit to have every part of the will of God fulfilled in every part of our lives. Our lives should be marked not by a little bit of desire for righteousness or just, "Yeah, righteousness is a good idea, and it might help me out in my life." No, no, it should be a longing, intense, continual pursuit whereby we go after it, lest we die. And this is what Jesus wants His disciples to realize, that those that are truly marked as believers in Jesus Christ, that belong to My kingdom, My disciples, they are those that are marked by a thirst and a hunger after My will and My commandments.

Look at He says there in verse number six, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." The idea here is that they will be fed to the full and satisfied. What will they be filled with? Well, it's quite obvious because the thing that they pursue is the very thing that they will have. And Jesus is telling His disciples, "You pursue righteousness, you'll be filled with righteousness. You pursue holiness, you'll be filled with holiness," is what Jesus is instructing His disciples. And interestingly enough, just as the Bible teaches us in verse number four that "they shall be comforted," meaning God Himself shall comfort them, or it is God who comforts them—they don't comfort themselves—it is the same here that "they shall be filled," and they shall be filled with righteousness from God.

And the Bible teaches us something very important about this, that it is God who fills the soul with righteousness. You see, the Bible doesn't teach that although we are to pursue holiness and pursue righteousness and to apply ourselves to the Word and will of God, the Bible does also emphatically teach us that it is God who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and also it teaches that it is the Lord who sanctifies us. And Jesus even says in His high priestly prayer to the Father, He says, "Sanctify them through Your truth; Your word is truth." And what it teaches us in the Word of God is that we are not alone in our sanctification; we are desperately in need of the grace of God, a grace which God has provided, that every time we come to a junction in which we must obey a commandment, the grace of God shall meet us there, that we might fulfill that righteousness.

And the Bible teaches us that God will fill the hungry soul and the thirsty soul for righteousness with righteousness. The beautiful thing about this is, basically, this truth: that there is no sanctification, therefore, without communion with God. You see, God hasn't given His people a mere set of commandments to follow and has left them and said, "Go on and do that, and I'm not going to be there to stir you, help you, correct you, rebuke you." No, no, He has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son, and He will fulfill that work within us. He will not fail at it; He will fulfill His work in us. And the Bible teaches us, if whoever you look at the commandments of God, it is often and almost always connected with a greater theme of our relationship to God or our communion with God, really well summarized in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from one degree of glory to another degree of glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

And what Paul is helping us understand here is that even though God gives us commandments, yes, but our duty as God's people in obedience to those commandments is to have our eyes set on Him. And as we behold His glory revealed in the gospel of the New Covenant, the mercies of David, the sure mercies of David extended to us, He says, "As you look and behold and worship the Savior, you will find that you will be changed from one degree of glory to another degree of glory as the Spirit of God conforms you and makes you more like the Lord Jesus Christ." But it's not without beholding Him; it's not without having our eyes set upon Him because He is the one that fills us with the righteousness that we long for. It is God who does it. It says, "You shall be filled," and that is both now in this life—we shall be filled with righteousness—and in the life to come, both now and not yet.

What do you mean by that? What this means is if you pursue righteousness and holiness in your life, you will start to see the working of God in

your life, making you more and more like Christ now. And as you grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord here in your pilgrimage here on earth, being conformed to the image of His dear Son, there will come a day where the heavens shall break open, and the Son of God, whom you have been seeking to be like, shall come in all His glory, and He will take our corruptible bodies, and He will fashion them like unto His glorious body, and He will change us, and all the dross of our corruption from the fallen nature that we have received from our father, that we have been battling with and warring with day after day, night after night, trying to be more and more conformed to the image of His Son, shall then in that day, when we see Him, be forever eradicated. Sin gone forever, and we shall be filled full, not just positionally in righteousness, but in true holiness. We will shine brighter than Adam did at the beginning. The glory of God will fill our lives and hearts, and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

And whoever has this hope purifies himself, even as He is pure. This is our hope as we hunger and thirst after righteousness. God meets us here to overcome the besetting sins of our lives, and as we continue to war this warfare, God will meet us with a righteousness that will shine like the sun. It'll be a glorious day where sin shall no longer molest us ever again.

So, what is this passage then teaching us? It teaches us a few important lessons that we must learn. It teaches us, first and foremost, that Christianity is experiential and it is living. You see, Jesus does not say in this passage, "Blessed are those that pursue knowledge." Neither does He say, "Blessed are those that are outwardly conformed to some legalistic pattern." But what Jesus touches on here is something that is an inward desire, a yearning. What He's simply trying to help us understand here is that your hungering and your thirsting are indicative of the fact that you belong to Me. What He's saying is that your relationship to God is a living one. A man that's dead doesn't hunger. When a man lives, he hungers. You know, Peter says it to the church, the scattered believers, he says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." And he's telling them, yes, you should be as newborn babes. Now, they probably weren't newborn babes, but he's saying you should never lose this characteristic of a newborn babe. And when it comes out from its mother's womb, it cannot last very long without crying because it wants to feed. And he's saying, "You should be like newborn babes that cry and long and desire the milk, the pure milk of God's Word. Why? Why should you? So you can grow and grow from being babies and growing in Christ." But that hunger that a baby has should always be seen in the lives of those that know the Lord.

Hunger. Christianity is not a lifeless set of propositions that we just tick a box to and agree with, and therefore we declare ourselves to be Chris-

tians. It is not because we have been declared in our baptisms that you are saved and that you are okay, that you are right with God. What Jesus is referring to here runs much deeper than just outward conformity. He's talking about a longing, a yearning, a desire, a burning in your heart to pursue after the holiness of God. This is what regeneration does in the life of a sinner, brings that dead sinner to life, that it loves what God loves and hates what God hates, and desires with all its being to pursue after the wisdom and will of God. And when that regenerates as a person falls into sin, they hunger for righteousness even more. They can't stand to live a life of sin. "God, deliver me from this sin. I want to be more like Your Son. I hate it. I know that it hurts. I can't live this way any longer." Why do they feel in such a way? Why can't they go on sinning? Why can't they keep on sinning? Because God's seed remains in them, because they are born of God, and those that are born of God hunger for the righteousness of God, and they thirst for the righteousness of God. And anything that interferes with the holiness of God in their life, even their own sin, they hate it, and they loathe it, and they long for the mercy of God. That's the mark of a Christian. That's the mark of those that know the Lord.

You see, the Spirit breathes life into the soul and produces a hunger and a thirst and a pursuit for righteousness that never leaves us until we get to glory. And although we are filled here in this life, we are like those American pygmy shrews that realize in 15 minutes, "I need more holiness." It doesn't take long before you realize, "Yes, thank You, God, for helping me in this area of my life, but Lord, I got this area too, and I hate this part too, and I want to love my neighbor as myself, and I'm struggling here too." And your hunger, and God is this continual struggle and satisfaction that God brings into the life of a believer. This is what marks us as true believers.

It teaches us that Christianity is not this lifeless, dead, indifferent religion, but there is life, and that life produces hunger and thirst. And it also teaches us that our passions and pursuits are important. You know, Jesus is talking about the passions and pursuits of His people, and this is very important for us to realize because we live in a world where there is a lot of pursuits and a lot of passion, but the passions and pursuits of this world are not for the things which God desires. Yes, the world hungers. Yes, the world thirsts. But they thirst after their own lusts and their own greed and their own desires and their own passions to satisfy their own lust. And Jesus knows, as we all know, what you hunger the most for is really what you prize the most. And He understands, as we should understand, that that which you pursue in your life and long after is that what you desire most, which begs the question, does it not, that if we say that we belong to the kingdom of God, yet we pursue the things which God does not love, which is not found in God's Word and according to God's will, what does that tell us about our hearts?

Do you love His word? Do you love His law? Do you love His people? Do you love the worship of God? Or do you find these things to be burdensome? Or do you find the truth of God and not to satisfy you? And if there is this hunger in your heart that is indifferent to the things of God, and you do not care for the things of God, then you have to check whether or not you belong to the kingdom of God. Because those that are marked by the salvation of God pursue the righteousness of God. And if your life is thinking, "When can I get the next sin, and when can I go and do the next dirty deed, or when can I go and watch the next, get my next fill of pornography, or the next fill of my drunkenness, or the next fill of my dirty jokes and talk," and your mind is consumed with the pursuit of these things, you better ask yourself, "Do I know the Lord?"

If your heart pursues revenge, and you do not grieve, and you don't moan, and you do not long for the courts of God and for the praise of God, you better ask yourself, "Do I know the Lord?" You see, those that know the Lord are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and that's one thing that is evident in their lives.

As a man by the name of Robert Murray M'Cheyne, who used to pray this regularly, and may God help us to make it a prayer in our lives, he says, "Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a pardoned sinner to be." "Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a pardoned sinner to be." He realized that, yes, my life is fraught with sin, but oh, I long for holiness. Oh, I long to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. This is something that we should be seeking after.

Do you want to be holy in every part of your life? Do you despise sin, hate sin? Or do you fill yourself with the world's junk? Do you cry, "Lord, make me like You"? Do you see sin as a damaging force in your life that is destroying you, your friendships, your relationships, destroying everything? Do you see it as a great evil that is destructive? Or do you see it as a cherished pet that you want to keep and savor in your life?

What do you say? "Lord, rid me of my pride. Lord, rid me of my anger. Lord, destroy every ounce of evil that resides within me. Lord, not only keep me from evil and let not sin have dominion over me," as the psalmist said, "but Lord, positively, let me be filled with righteousness, with joy, with peace, with love for my neighbor. Let me be filled with mercy. Let me be filled with kindness. Oh, to be like Thee, oh, to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art. Help me."

It was John Stott who said this: "If we are conscious of slow growth, is the reason that we have a jaded appetite?" He's saying, "If we're conscious

of slow growth, is not the reason that we have a jaded appetite?" And I will say, "Amen," and "Yes," to that. That if you are conscious of slow growth in your life, it is because you are not hungering enough and thirsting enough after God. Don't blame God for your unrighteousness. Don't blame God for your sin. Understand and recognize this, that it is those that are hungering and thirsting after righteousness that shall be filled. And if you pursue it with every fiber of your being, you will find that every corner, the grace of God, to help you walk in the holiness of God.

Don't say, "It's too hard to live right." Don't say, "It's too hard to live holy." God's grace is there to make it possible for us to believe. This is our certainty, our confidence, that that which we seek after, we shall have. And the Church of Jesus Christ should be a strong army in holiness, dressed in righteousness, fighting the good fight of faith against evil, not being overcome with it. This should mark us as God's people.

Or the Gentiles, they worry and they seek after the things of this life, but what did Jesus tell His disciples? "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "Oh, I'll give more time to holiness and reading my Bible, and I'll give more time to prayer, and I'll give more time to the study of scriptures if I didn't have to go to work, or if I didn't have so many kids to trouble me." Sure, your measure of the amount will be limited by your capacity, will be, you know, limited by your situation, no doubt about that. Are you hungering and thirsting after it, or making excuses for it? There's a vast difference.

We are to give every flying minute something to keep in store. Work, for the night is coming when man shall work no more. This is the hour of our obedience. This is the hour of our pursuit. This is the hour of our hungering and thirsting. And it's not time to sit down while the devil is fighting and working against the Church of God. It is time to rise, O Church of God, and live holy and live righteously before God, to fight the good fight of faith.

You see, nothing compares to the satisfaction that comes from communion with God by a holiness of life. None of the pleasures of this world can ever satisfy the taste of basking in the presence of God because you are there with Him in glory, praying, reading, studying, meditating, and speaking to your Father. Nothing's better. Nothing satisfies more than communion with God. And the world's junk is Satan's way of keeping us from that quiet place of rest. And you wonder why the church isn't as happy as she should be. Wonder why she's not filled with joy and happiness, and the blessedness of God is not shining forth from her life. It is because she's not hungering and thirsting after righteousness as she should.

Maybe this is the first time you've felt in your heart a longing for righ-

teousness and holiness. Maybe you're saying, "Josh, I have lived in un-righteousness and sin all my days, but today I'm hungering after it. I want to be righteous. I want to live right. I want to know God. I want to pursue Him. I want to commune with Him and have His life lived out in me." Well, understand this, that your Savior thirsted on the cross so that you might thirst after Him. He died, and hanging there on the cross, He cried, "I thirst," and He thirsted so that His people might pursue Him in a thirst and hunger after Him and be satisfied with the righteousness that He has secured there upon the cross.

Oh, hungry soul, if you're hungering after righteousness, hear the word of Jesus who says, "Don't labor for the food which perishes, but labor for the food which I give, which leads and endures to everlasting life." You say, "I am hungry, and I'm thirsting for righteousness." Well, you must first come to the bread from heaven and eat of Him. You must first drink from the water of life and be satisfied with Him. He is our righteousness. He is our only hope for righteousness. Stop eating from the junk of this world and come and be satisfied with God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Repent from the pursuits that leave you empty and come and be filled by the righteousness of God found in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Such mercy, you say, is too great. How can I come to it? How can I receive such righteousness? How can I be brought into relationship with God and have this blessedness? Well, understand this, although it cost the Lord Jesus much, it is given to us at a very low price. Isaiah chapter 55, I read this in closing, says these words: "Oh, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David. Come, buy without money and without price, for Jesus has paid it all."

Let us pray.