

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 12 Sep 2021

Sermon Title : Hunger and Thirst

Speaker : Rev John Foo

Text : Matthew 5:6

INTRODUCTION

To better understand the setting for the Sermon on the Mount, we will look at Matthew Chapter 4 where Matthew records Jesus having been tempted in the wilderness, goes on to begin to preach saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand". (v.17) From verse 23, we can see the progression of Jesus' ministry in preaching this message, leading up to Him preaching throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, and eventually to the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount in Chapter 5. This Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes because they speak of the Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God, and paints a picture of what human life is like in the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus proclaimed in Chapter 4. It gives us a picture of what kind of character we ought to possess or how we are to conduct ourselves in this Kingdom. Through the Beatitudes, Jesus shows us the contrast between life in the Kingdom of God and outside the Kingdom, giving us an idea of who is living the Kingdom life and who is not. The fourth Beatitude we are looking at today tells us that the believer's life in the Kingdom of God is marked by an unceasing, overwhelming craving for righteousness that is being satisfied by God Himself.

Hunger and Thirst – Overwhelming craving for righteousness

These 2 terms basically refer to our physical appetite in our physical body for food and water. The original wording in the text refers to intense hunger and extreme thirst. Likewise, Jesus is saying our craving for righteousness must be as intense as our intense craving for food and water in such hunger and thirst; those belonging to the Kingdom ought to have that intense, desperate craving for righteousness.

Righteousness – in a right relationship with God

- Through Christ's justifying righteousness we are being put right with God.
- Our obedient submission to the reign and rule of God in our lives. That would require us to submit ourselves and do what is right according to His ways.
- Personal purity in life; how we keep ourselves holy and pure, abhorring sin and keeping away from anything that could pull us away from God.
- Our normal natural self does not instinctively incline towards that righteousness. We would not thirst and hunger for this righteousness unless

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

God remakes us by putting the life of His Son in us through His Holy Spirit. That spiritual life must be reborn in us. When we have the life of our Lord Jesus Christ in us and we let Him have His way in us completely, the new life in Christ will naturally trigger our hunger and thirst for His righteousness.

How to Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness?

Whilst we have the new life in Christ we still carry with us the old sinful nature with us as well, and these two lives in us are in constant conflict; the former craves for God's righteousness but the latter shuns it. We need to put ourselves in the right state or condition to thirst and hunger and receive God's righteousness. To do so we need to appreciate that the Beatitudes are connected:

1st Beatitude: Poor in Spirit – When we come to realize that we are poor in spirit we recognize our insufficiency; we are unworthy as we are all sinners.

2nd Beatitude: Mourn – Therefore we should mourn over that state of being poor in spirit and our need for God's forgiveness.

3rd Beatitude: Meek – In true repentance when we come to God we strip ourselves off of all kinds of self-conceit and self-sufficiency, then we will begin to humble ourselves in meekness, in realization that we have nothing that we can boast about.

4th Beatitude: Hunger and Thirst –

- When these 3 Beatitudes are in our lives, the 4th will come naturally. When we come to God to yield to His will in meekness and total dependence, we will naturally have the hunger and thirst for God's righteousness.
- The more we experience the first three Beatitudes, the more intense that hunger and thirst for righteousness is going to be, because our hearts and souls would be primed to receive the righteousness of God.
- This means that all the Beatitudes have to be taken as a whole and we cannot pick or choose which Beatitude we like.

Be Satisfied

- The blessedness is in the earnest craving. Jesus does not say we become blessed when we receive the righteousness because it would be redundant as righteousness itself is a blessing.
- It is an unceasing craving. The promise is that we will be filled or satisfied. It is not a promise that will come at a future date. Jesus was saying that we will be filled with righteousness so long as there is genuine hunger and thirst for it.
- There is no such thing as having arrived or attained all the righteousness we ever need in or lives. Our physical hunger and thirst can be satisfied but in this Beatitude Jesus was not referring to being completely filled or satisfied, with no more need for it because we will not stop craving for God's righteousness.

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

- The more we are filled with God's righteousness, the more we will crave for it.

If we ever think that we have attained the righteousness that we need for our spiritual lives, we need to be mindful that it could be "Pharisaic righteousness". The Pharisees did not seem poor in spirit or mournful but looked like they had already attained all the righteousness needed to satisfy themselves. They felt superior over others as shown in the way they shunned and disdained sinners and in the way they put legalities or unnecessary burdens on God's laws and their own laws. It was this kind of righteousness that made them arrogant and superior over others and led them to think they were better than others, both spiritually as well as in righteousness.

True Righteousness

In a church, there should also not be anyone who feels they are more superior to others because:

- True righteousness from God not only satisfies, it also creates even more hungering and thirsting for it – we are not better than others and still need the righteousness of God. It creates a fresh appetite and it refreshes us to do right with and not hurt others; enough yet not enough.
- This craving is filled or satisfied by God himself – Unlike the Pharisees, we do not use our own works to satisfy this craving for righteousness.
- If we want true righteousness we must look to God alone because only God can and will fill or satisfy us
 - He alone is the initiator and giver of this righteousness in Kingdom living. Our own righteousness will not qualify us for the Kingdom of God because Jesus Christ paid the price for this righteousness which is essential for us to gain entrance into God's Kingdom.
 - He alone is the true source and sustainer of all spiritual life in the Kingdom.

Should we ever feel our spiritual life a drudgery going through a set of motion or work without joy or fun, we may be trying to satisfy a self-made righteousness that will never satisfy as it does not fill us with the yearning for God's righteousness.

CONCLUSION

Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all other things will be put in their proper place and perspective. Everything flows from seeking God's Kingdom and righteousness. When we know what is right, are right with God as Kingdom people, do what is right and keep ourselves away from sin, there is no shortage of the blessings of God that will come our way. Let us ask God if He is pleased with the way we relate to Him; if He finds joy in our living, thought, word and deed. May we truly hunger and thirst to be filled with the true righteousness of God and be an offering of praise and thanksgiving to Him in our lives and in our relating and doing right to one another as Kingdom people.

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Matthew 5:6 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’

All to respond, “Thanks be to God.” Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.”

- a. As God’s word was read, how has this verse spoken to you?

- b. (i) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon “Hunger and Thirst”?

- (ii) How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. When we have the life of our Lord Jesus Christ in us and we let Him have His way in us completely, the new life in Christ will naturally trigger our hunger and thirst for His righteousness. Whilst we have the new life in Christ we still carry with us our old sinful nature. How can you overcome the conflict between this new life and your old sinful nature which shuns God's righteousness?
- 2b. The hunger and thirst for God's righteousness is unceasing and only God can satisfy.
 - (i) Why is it dangerous to think you have attained enough righteousness without the need for more?
 - (ii) If this hunger and thirst is unceasing, how then can you be truly satisfied and what does this tell you about the kind of relationship God wants with you?
- 3a. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 the least and 10 the most, how much do you hunger and thirst for God's righteousness?
- 3b. What is one challenge or obstacle you face in seeking God's righteousness?
- 3c. What is one thing you need to change in your life so that you can move up the scale?
- 3d. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 3c above, for the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on how the Holy Spirit freed you from the burden of seeking self-made righteousness to seeking God's true righteousness.

OR

Give thanks to God for His promise that He alone will satisfy your hunger and thirst for His righteousness.

5. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 3c and 3d to God, asking for the Holy Spirit to reveal your spiritual poverty so you may mourn your lack and seek God's righteousness in meekness.

Take time to pray for every group member, and for our church, that we may be Kingdom people who genuinely hunger and thirst unceasingly to be filled with the righteousness of God so we would always offer our praises of joy and thanksgiving to God, relating and doing right to one another and receive one another with the joy of the Lord.

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