

Sermon on the Mount: Hunger & Thirst for Righteousness

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a deep desire to be right with God, to please God, and to express the life received from God as his citizens, which is essential for knowing the kingdom of his Son.

Duration: 46:09

Scripture: Psalm 42:1-2, Psalm 63:1, Isaiah 64:6, Matthew 5:3-6, John 4:14

Topics: "Sermon on the Mount"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. He highlights that Jesus is the preacher of this sermon and brings good news to humanity. The speaker mentions that the world has changed since Jesus' time and wonders how Jesus would depict the world today. He emphasizes the need for believers to have a deep hunger and thirst for righteousness and encourages prayer for a new hunger and thirst for the souls of oneself, family, and church. The sermon concludes by emphasizing that the Word of God and the Holy Spirit have the power to transform and create a deep longing for righteousness within believers.

Transcript

Now, we have come today to the words of verse 6. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. They will be filled. Some time, I believe it was quite a number of years following the end of World War II, an American cartoonist made a name for himself by a cartoon that appeared under his name.

It was rather unusual. There were no figures, not even a few lines. It was just a square painted in black and underneath the caption, The World of Tomorrow.

A square painted in black. The World of Tomorrow. I wonder how he would depict in his own inimitable way the world that has developed since those days, because this must have been 20 years ago now.

I wonder how he would refer to the world of today. Whatever the correct answer to that question may or may not be, here we find our Lord Jesus Christ, I would almost say, dancing onto the scene, as we have previously said, bringing good news to men and starting off his eight or nine beatitudes with this remarkable word, blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed. These words are especially significant when we

remember that one of the closing words in the last book of the Old Testament was one which spoke of a coming curse.

In the New Testament opens when Jesus, having announced that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, personified in himself, the rule of heaven is manifested in heaven's only begotten Son. Having expressed something of the significance of that in the authoritative words of his lips and by the mighty power of his hands, he now comes onto the scene, onto the stage to teach his own disciples in a more formal sense this prolonged sermon on the mount and he begins each major statement with this word, blessed. He defies the man with a black square and he says there is good news where everything is dark.

There is hope where everything, humanly speaking, is hopeless and he brings it. And it is a great privilege in this 20th century to be able to declare that the Christ of yesteryear is still the Lord of today and the Savior who brings light into the darkness, who was anointed of God to preach good tidings to the poor, release to the prisoners and so forth as we heard from Isaiah chapter 61 this morning. For those scriptures were fulfilled in him and to make men grow in such a manner that they would be spoken of please don't miss this, as oaks of righteousness.

God is the only one who can foretell what he's about to do and what Jesus says here will be true of the members of his kingdom God said through Isaiah the prophet would come to pass. I says the Lord back there if I may summarize the word I will make men to be oaks of righteousness to beautify the landscape and to show something of the power and the strength of my own right hand. Well we have come to this point in the Beatitudes where we're now looking then at these wonderful words and yet I think we shall agree most challenging blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are you among them? The first thing I would like you to notice is the pathway to blessedness involves a deep desire we shall enlarge upon that in a moment but let's just refer to it now as a deep desire for righteousness.

The first thing that demands our attention in this fourth Beatitude is the fact that the route into the experience of blessedness involves going this way there are other features we've seen already and there are others yet to come but here is one aspect of experience that cannot be missed members of the kingdom of God have to come along this way where they discover in their souls by the grace of God a hunger and a thirst for righteousness in vain do you and I say that we have been born again of the spirit of God unless we know something of this in vain do we claim that we are living in fellowship with the living God unless we know something of this a hunger and a thirst for righteousness is something says Jesus that is indispensable for those who are to be the citizens of his kingdom not

in order to earn their way in of course that is the free gift of his grace but in order to express the life they receive from him as his citizens, as his subjects, as his disciples the pursuit of blessedness as outlined in these telling words of our Lord now seem to take what we might call a new turn in the progression of the Beatitudes you notice here hitherto the process has been one of humiliation and self-discovery blessed are the poor in spirit it's a devastating moment in the life of anyone to realize that he can do, she can do nothing at all to save himself or herself and I've no idea, I've no doubt but that all of us who've gone this way would add to the truth of that today when suddenly the spirit of God showed us that our very righteousnesses were a filthy rag not our

unrighteousnesses but our righteousnesses that the very best we could do was infinitely short of what God requires of us so that we can only say nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling naked come for dress foul come for cleansing and so forth in other words we are utterly dependent upon the grace of God

when a man, when a woman sees himself in that light then that is a, that is a day or a night to be remembered but that's not the end following that according to the Lord Jesus there comes a night and the day of mourning blessed are they that mourn not so much now, though this may come of course but in the first place not so much mourning for the sins of other people and their impact upon us and upon society and upon history and upon God's creation we'll probably mourn for

those things too in due course if we walk with God but first of all a mourning because of what our own sins have done to us as God's creatures that the God who made us to bear his image and to do his will is a God who is seeing in us the kind of creature he can't he can hardly recognize of the one he made fulfilling the purpose he had in mind for us and we begin to weep have you come that far? have you lost a tear ever, ever? because your life is dishonoring to God but we're still going down you see down, down, down into the valley of almost despair because the next beatitude says blessed are the meek now the meek man is the person who has come to a point in his spiritual pilgrimage where knowing himself to be the person he is morally and spiritually he doesn't expect good from God nor

does he expect man to make him the center of the universe that's a mighty spiritual miracle you know we all want people to say well of us we all want people to bow down to us we all want people to make room for us but when a man or a woman has come to this point that he doesn't expect God to do anything good for him and doesn't expect man to lord him and magnify him that man's meek, that is meekness so the whole of the trend in those first three beatitudes is down it's this awesome, this awful self-discovery it's this breaking up of the old nature it's this crucifying of the self but you notice that things now begin to change something happens when we've been brought down here there emerges in the soul something which is altogether new and positive what is it? it's a hunger and a thirst

for righteousness at this point in his experience the sinner in the process of saving transformation wants to please God he yearns now for what he hasn't got and what he hasn't done and to be right with God and to please God have you come there? you will notice that we have reached a point in the progressive experience delineated in the beatitudes then which is altogether new it manifests a turn in the road when a man now is not simply concerned with grieving concerning his own situation but his grief takes a new complexion he wants to be what God wants him to be he wants to do what God wants him to do this it seems to me is what the term righteousness really means in the context here before us it is a longing to be right with God not just to save my own skin and evade the jaws of hell

not just to be able to turn my back upon the path to perdition but to be right with God to please God this is entirely in accord with Old Testament the Old Testament usage of the word righteousness which is often synonymous with salvation moreover if we are to interpret the language of our text accurately I think we must take account of what some of the grammarians tell us here you'll forgive me for introducing another grammatical note I don't like doing this but it has to be done every now and again you know there is an important point of grammar here three or four of the commentators that I've been conferring with recently make the point and it is important verbs of hungering and thirsting are generally followed by the genitive case now if this is not your field switch off for a moment

I'll call you back the reason being you see if I'm hungering for a drink for water I don't want all the water there is in the world I only want part of the water there is in the world enough to slake my own thirst I don't want all the bread there is in the world I only want part of it and the genitive case covers that but sometimes, now you can come back those of you who went to sleep sometimes the genitive case is not used but the accusative is employed and when the accusative is employed it means this that a man does

not simply want part of the water in the jug but the whole jug not part of the loaf but the whole loaf not a little of what God gives but everything that God gives in terms of what we have before us not some aspect of God's righteousness but total righteousness that's what

Jesus said blessed is the man who hungers and thirsts for total righteousness you say what on earth is that? may I suggest to you that it covers a number of things as I understand it this would include what Paul refers to as justification God in infinite mercy taking away our sins and forgiving our transgressions and clothing us with the very garb of the Saviour's righteousness so that in the sight of God we are just as if we'd never sinned it includes that the imputation to an unrighteous person of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ clothed in his righteousness alone sings the hymn Jesus thy blood and righteousness my beauty are my glorious dress that's the concept but it isn't only that it will involve something more than that it will involve something akin to what the psalmist

has in mind when he says about God thou desirest truth in the inward parts righteousness in the way I think think about myself think about my friends think about my foes think about people near think about people far righteousness in the way I think and in the way I inwardly react to things I believe it even goes beyond that it will include in due course a concern that men and women everywhere are treated on the basis of righteousness social righteousness he is an enigmatic figure who says that he is concerned to be right with God but does not feel when unrighteousness rules in the land and in courts of law and in other places total righteousness means this it's the whole thing to be right with God in and of myself in what I think and what I do and what I am in my innermost life a life of

inner heart rectitude and then in my attitude and my desire and my quest for all the peoples of the world brothers and sisters it should worry you and it should worry me that there are millions of people today because of their association with the name of Jesus Christ that are being unjustly treated in the world and we should be doing something about it total righteousness now listen I am not preaching a social gospel but I am preaching total righteousness and I believe Jesus taught it blessed is the man who hungers and thirsts after total righteousness you see my friend whether you realize it or not are you a believer? you and I are going to live in a world where righteousness is at home and there is nothing else there all unrighteousness will have been swept out everything that offends

has been cleared off the stage there will be nothing there but righteousness in the new heavens and the new earth come down purged the old earth purged and the new come down and righteousness is at home there and as the heirs of so great a hope you and I have got to exhibit to God and to men right now that we are concerned with total righteousness Hosea tells the people of his day that they were half-baked have you come across that? you know these prophets must have had a sense of humor too but you know what he meant don't you? they'd only been cooked on one side you know many of us have only been cooked on one side and there's a whole side of our lives that hasn't started cooking yet and we need to be turned around and we need to see the wholeness of God's vision and the wholeness of

God's concern and we need to be following in the foot marks of the Christ who was concerned for all, for total righteousness the second thing I would like you to notice is the intensity with which this desire should be expressed could I put it like this perhaps?

Jesus expects it to be expressed in terms of a hunger and thirst now hunger and thirst are elemental experiences of human life and they express themselves in varying degrees at various times it's commonplace to say that hunger the felt need for food and thirst the corresponding desire in relation to

drink are necessary to health absolutely indispensable to health the absence of hunger and thirst marks death either in progress or already present you see a corpse has no appetite and I know men and women who come to church sometimes but they have no appetite, they're still dead they have no hunger, they have no thirst they'll go and play games a couple of hundred yards away from the place where the word of God is expounded and people are worshipping they have no hunger they have no thirst

they're in the grip of something that has never been broken there's a winter in the soul that hasn't been dealt with by an omnipotent God they've never come out from the grave yet they're like Lazarus even if they have come out their grave clothes are holding them and you know we have many many people here in Knox who've never been seen to worship God on the Lord's Day evening I don't understand that this to me is one of the greatest mysteries in this beloved community you're the dearest people that I've ever known you're the kindest, you're the most generous and I love you dearly but I don't understand why some of you dear people only hunger and thirst for God on a Sunday morning and it can be confined to that you know I've often asked would it be better if I left the scene and somebody

else could minister to you far more profitably and I would willingly do it for if I am holding something back and men are not coming to spiritual life to hunger and thirst after God then in the name of the Lord either the congregation or the preacher have got something to answer for but this is one of those serious things that is so lacking among us it's a real hunger a real thirst a real yearning for God that gets us out of bed rather than come into the service halfway through to meet the King of Kings with our eyes dreary where were we last night you know I'm tempted to go off at a tangent but you see the kind of thing that's on my heart I shall not say any more about it where there's a hunger where there's a thirst where there's a yearning for the living God oh brothers and sisters we

know it when we see it don't we the absence of hunger and thirst marks death and this is equally true in the spiritual realm as in the physical Robert Louis Stevenson in his Master of Ballantrae refers to the malady of not wanting that's a very pregnant phrase the malady of not wanting I don't want any more I'm fed up I've had enough I don't want anything I haven't any more hunger I haven't any more thirst I want to get up the table you have children like that you've only just started dad can I leave the table man you haven't put the spoon in your mouth yet can I leave the table they can't stand it the malady of not wanting the world is full the church is full of people with the malady of not wanting now let's be clear about this also in our Lord's thoughts as expressed in this beatitude

lies the concept of a very real hunger and a real thirst I want to stress the reality of it Jesus is thinking of the real thing in each case unquestionably this needs to be stressed because in our much blessed western world you see we don't really know much about hunger and thirst on the natural realm do we? what do we know about hunger? what do we know about thirst? the old testament knew more about it because the new testament emerged from the middle east and you can see you can read how it is reflected in some of our psalms the 42nd for example as the deer pants for streams of water you got that? as the deer pants for streams of water so my soul pants for you oh God my soul thirsts for God for the living God that's real hungering and thirsting or listen to the 63rd psalm oh God you are

my God earnestly I seek you my soul thirsts for you my body longs for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water and the 84th psalm again you have the same kind of background you see my soul yearns even faints for the courts of the Lord my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God there it is and there it is as a purely spiritual desire that is expressed and that is the kind of thing that our Lord is thinking about here there is such a thing as real hunger and real thirst for God and without it there is no knowing the

kingdom of his Son that's the point unless you know something of this in your soul my friend you really have to come to terms with this possibility that one day you will find that the door of the kingdom is closed to you and Jesus will tell you I didn't know you

you didn't hunger enough you didn't thirst enough to come near to me for anything you could get on without me singing about me talking about me preaching about me but I didn't know you if blessing depends upon appetite if the filled are the hungry and the thirsty we are I trust in the way of that blessing are we?

I remember a sermon by the late Dr. W.E. Sangster of Central Hall Methodist Church in Westminster in London great man that he was a certainly great preacher I may have referred to this before I don't know strange if I haven't he refers to the great Fletcher of Madeley a great man of God who had preached a sermon under unusual anointing on one occasion and there was social commotion I won't go into the details but that one sermon of Fletcher's quelled what would have been a very serious situation now Fletcher's sole notion was to preach the word of God to the glory of God he wasn't thinking of the social impact of his ministry at the time when he preached the sermon but he did not miss the authorities and the ruling powers of the day thought that Fletcher ought to be, ought to be given something some acknowledgement of his great service to society and the Chancellor of England the Lord Chancellor of England called to see him the Lord Chancellor wasn't quite sure how to approach the subject as to how they could honour Fletcher of Madeley this saintly man how they could honour him for the service he had rendered to his own society and to society at large and he beat about the bush and he he wasn't cutting any ice at all Fletcher as Dr.

Sangster says Fletcher like some of the saints are very dull to self-interest from time to time and he didn't see what the man was talking about and then the Lord Chancellor became a little more definite, not definite yet but he came to this point, he said Sir, he said, is there anything that we the majesty's government could you know, and he wasn't filling in the blanks as if to say tell us what we can do for you and at long last the dear old man of God saw what he was getting at Oh, how kind of you, says Fletcher of Madeley how kind of you, how kind of you you were offering me something anything you ask for, says the Lord Chancellor Oh, sir, said Fletcher there's only thing, one thing I need grace he says grace and more grace I need nothing in this world poor man that he was if you'd

seen his house you would have known I need nothing, only grace see the point he was a thirst, he was hungry what is anything else Oh, brothers and sisters if you are praying today for yourself for your soul, for the souls of your family for the souls in your church pray for a new hunger and a new thirst I read of a man in the Middle East who got lost in one of the deserts I don't remember which but I do remember his report he said that someone found him and brought him back to life and in reporting he said the first day, he said after the first full day it seems to me, the first full day I would have given my right arm he says, for just a cup of cold water by the end of the second day I would have given my two arms for half a cup full by the end of the third day I would have given two

arms, two legs and my life for a drop of water brought by a dirty finger and touch my tongue Oh, my friend this is what Jesus expects the Word to do within us and the Spirit to create within us something that gets us out of bed in the morning something that brings us to our knees during the daytime something that brings us together to the house of God to hear His Word and to obey it and to heed it and to put it into practice something that sends us into the four corners of the world this marvelous compulsion born of the Holy Ghost do you know anything of it? do I? and I end with this unbelievable, it's unbelievable did we not

know, the speaker did we not know that Jesus is the preacher of this sermon I would find this very difficult to believe listen to my text blessed are those who

hunger and thirst for righteousness for they may some sometime be filled didn't say that they may partly be filled didn't say that do you know what he said? they will be filled which means, you see that if we are without the fullness of which Jesus speaks it means that we are not hungry enough or thirsty enough to receive it oh, such intense desire as we have been considering cannot go unfilled and I'll tell you why it cannot go unfilled because where you find the kind of hungering and thirsting of which Jesus speaks here it is first of all it is the creation of the spirit in the soul of man that's why Jesus can say they will be filled you see friends the preacher in the pulpit can't work a congregation up to hunger and thirst after righteousness now I know the limitation of my gifts but

I know if I use certain techniques I could work up a congregation to do this and to do that oh yeah, I'm sure of it don't ask me to start I am absolutely sure of it because I have done it in a secular capacity and it is possible to work up congregations to do this and to do that but there is no man there is no group of men that can work up this kind of thing in the souls of men a hunger and a thirst after righteousness where does it come from then? well it only comes from the work of the spirit of God in the souls of men and that's why Jesus is able to say this kind of thing will be fulfilled because it's the spirit that has brought about the condition or let me say another thing they will be filled because it is the son of God who promises it and when you have the promise of the son and

the power of the spirit working together you may be sure that this kind of thing is possible we may have never seen it we may be ignorant of this kind of this dimension of things going on in the church so tepid as the church is today and we know nothing at all about it but I tell you, when the promise of the son and the power of the spirit are working together you can expect things that some of us have never seen I close with this let me show you in closing that there are at least there is a threefold answer to the question how, if you ask it if you press it further to begin with those who so hunger and thirst will immediately be clothed upon with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ I come back to where we began almost the first part of it will be will be answered when you and I

really see ourselves as lost without the Savior undone and our very righteousnesses our very good works as filthy rags before God when we come to him in penitence and with remorse he will clothe us with a garment of righteousness further those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will constantly and increasingly be filled with a burden for righteous living that will pervade heart and mind and conscience and will bringing each activity of the personality to render to God what he desires and what pleases him this is sanctification where the whole of the inner life is brought under the rule and under the reign of the Lord whose right it is to rule beyond that lastly such as fulfill the terms of this fourth beatitude will find ultimately that they have been so completely transformed from

glory into glory that when they appear before God they bear the very image of the Holy One himself being made free from every taint of sin being without spot or wrinkle or any such thing and they will have had a share en route to that ultimate destiny they will have had a share in manifesting righteousness and expressing righteousness which is glorifying to our ever blessed and altogether righteous Lord this as I understand it and nothing short of this is salvation it's a very easy thing just to put up my hand and say I want to follow Jesus it's a very easy thing comparatively to write my name on a piece of paper and say I want to trust Jesus I want Jesus as my friend I want to be in heaven with him I want to walk with him it's very easy brothers and sisters let us make sure that we are

talking about the salvation that Jesus himself talked about and he says this is the way the way into the blessedness of the kingdom is this way it takes this route we haven't come to the end of it yet and these are things that should be going on and on in the hearts of men and women as we discover more and more of the sin that is in our hearts we shall be made sad and we shall mourn and we should be becoming more and more meek and more and more humble and hungering more and more for righteousness we should even be able to come to show mercy to be merciful and to be peacemakers and even to suffer for righteousness sake and so forth all these things grow out of the experience of blessedness in so far as it is experienced at any given point as I conclude this morning will you forgive me if I

press the question have you begun the journey is there someone here this morning who has never seen himself or herself as lost without Jesus Christ as a personal saviour, lost ask him to show you the truth about yourself ask him to give you a penitence a remorse a loathing of the thing that brings you down to hell ask him to create soul thirst for himself and if in your heart of heart this morning you already have it and you find something within you saying oh my god I need you this morning and I want you and I'm going to cry upon you and I'm going to trust you and I'm going to start out on the pilgrimage this morning my brother, my sister do it do it this is the day the Lord hath made let us rejoice and be glad in it this is a day of salvation this is no concert and if it helps you to

come down the aisle, one of these aisles and stand at the front and have a word of prayer with us at the close then just do so that's not necessary for you to be saved but if it helps you, come brother, come sister make it public to others that you mean business, that you do really want to do something come do it and I tell you that the Lord Jesus the head of the church will be here to welcome you in his name we shall do so but he will welcome you into his arms, into his hands into his keeping, into his care and when once he begins a good work in you he will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ we're going to pray now but after that when we come to sing our closing hymn, I'm going to ask you to consider perhaps you ought to come forward and make a confession of your faith this

morning pray about it as we pray together now, let us pray our God, our heavenly Father we bless your holy name that we are together in your sanctuary today and that your word this living word of God is still among us and the Holy Spirit is still among his people and it doesn't depend upon the mere human being in the pulpit to be responsible for the success of a service such as this because you are among your people, oh Lord draw us after you, in the way of blessedness in the way of peace and joy and everlasting life which is the way of your kingdom and your rule over us bring us to yourself and lead us on and as it may be some of our brothers and sisters here this morning already yearn to do this feel they ought to do this and to manifest it in some public way enable them so to do grant

them your grace and grant us all so to magnify your holy name together that yours alone shall be the glory we ask it in our blessed savior's name Amen

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