

Are you desperate to be blessed?
Matthew 5:6: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Sermon February 1, 2009, notes by Peter Vaughn

This beatitude is not for everybody. You can not expect God's blessing unless you want righteousness. The point Jesus makes, the point I want to make, is that *Those who want righteousness will be blessed by God.*

I. Another way to get at this idea is to ask, "How badly do you want to be like Jesus?"

After what do you hunger and thirst?

We live in a culture that glorifies idolatry. We don't call our false god, "Baal" we call him "NFL". We don't call our master, "Mammon," we call him "prosperity" or "hard work."

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. After what do you hunger and thirst?

--to finish school

--to get married

--to get a job, to get a particular job

--what do you spend your time thinking about? Money? sex? cars? sports? What do your conversations usually revolve around? Kids? food? weight? your job, your husband, your parents (--complaints in these last three categories.) Whether it is easy to admit or not, *that* is what you hunger and thirst after!

All of us that are Christians will say we want to be righteous. But how badly?

--perhaps it was Augustine who said, "Make me holy, but not yet."

--I want to be holy enough to be *thought by others* to be righteous. (This was me for many years.)

I hunger and thirst for righteousness if I am desperate for it. If I am convinced that I might as well die without it **and** I admit that I am powerless to become righteous. Only then do you hunger and thirst after righteousness in the sense Jesus is speaking of. Are you desperate for righteousness and see that you *are not* and *will not* get there by yourself? The 1st step of change, the 1st step of repentance, the 1st step of new life is admitting that something has to change and that you cannot change yourself.

The celebrate recovery program mirrors these beatitudes—the 1st step in celebrate is, "I recognize that I am powerless over my idolatry." In order to change, we have to admit that we need change—that we are idolaters.

--whether drugs or alcohol

--doubt and fear

--whether your besetting sin is pride and refusal to trust or

--opposition to forgiving and being forgiven?

The 3rd step is, “I am willing to have God change me.” That is where this beatitude comes in—God ***promises*** to change you if you want to be righteous.

There is a parallel to the psychiatrist joke—“How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb? One, but the light bulb has to *want* to be changed.”

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. If you are not at that point, don’t let me talk you into anything you don’t want to do. Come back to these beatitudes when you need to—when you are ready.

II. Jesus is the definition of the righteousness that we so want to have.

If we say someone is righteous, that doesn’t just mean an absence of bad—that he is good and not evil. Righteousness is a positive—if a woman is OK in all that she does, we might say that she is a righteous woman. Truth and goodness and beauty are all tied up in *righteousness*. WCF What is God?

The Bible has a great deal to say about righteousness. Hosea 10:12

Philippians 1:11 Jeremiah 23:6

To see yourself so far from the righteousness of Christ that you are parched, dying of thirst, and to admit you are not making progress in that direction, is to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

III. God blesses everyone who hungers and thirsts for righteousness. I’m going to talk about blessing.

Numbers 6:24 *The Lord bless you and keep you;*

the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;

the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. This benediction unpacks the word “blessed.”

Some translations use “happy”—this is lame. It is true, but insufficient to describe “blessed.”

It is like saying you feel good after joyous, enthusiastic sex with your wife of years—“good” just begins to describe how you feel.

“The Lord bless you and keep you.” The image is that of a Middle Eastern king holding *majlis*. His subjects, you and me, line up to come into his presence to make our requests—our grievances, favors, hope for justice, and desires—known to the king.

“. . . the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. . .” You come into the king’s presence and he sees you—his face lights up! He smiles. —and he is gracious to you, he invites you to sit down beside him.

“. . . the Lord turn his face toward you and grant you peace.” The king turns to you on his couch and listens to you—he pays attention to you, and to nobody else. And he gives you peace. He applies his wisdom, his resources, to what you say—to what has you preoccupied—and he gives you *shalom*.

The desire of your heart—what you are worshipping—the Lord is going to give you. – The Lord is not going to help you be an idolater, he will not help you get closer to false gods—only closer to himself—hunger and thirst after righteousness—WCF catechism You shall be blessed.

IV. Jesus not only promises that you will be blessed when you seek righteousness, he tells us *how much* we’ll be blessed—*they will be filled*.

The idea of *shalom* does not allow for “good enough,” it has to be a lot! –full and overflowing—more than you need—more than you imagined! Hear these verses of Scripture that describe God’s bounty to those he favors.

Psalms 23:5

Malachi 3:10

Ephesians 3:19

John 15:11

Blessed are you when you hunger and thirst for righteousness, for you will be filled.

Celebrate Recovery is a program with steps that can lead you to God’s blessing. There is structure, there is discipline and accountability, and there are clear biblical goals.

But it is not for everyone. . . it is possible to pursue righteousness without a structured plan. . . it is also possible that you are not ready to truly pursue righteousness at all. “Lord, make me holy—but not yet!” Jesus is not offering to bless part-time commitments. He will not share your worship with anything else—*have no other gods before me!*

But the king smiles when he sees you; he is gracious to you. He will pour *shalom* over your head and hands and heart.

Blessed be the name of the Lord!