

Longing for Righteousness

The Beatitudes

By Don Green

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Bible Verse: Matthew 5:6
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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5 for our text this evening as we return to the Beatitudes, which is the opening portion of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. I'm going to read the first four verses to set the context as we will be considering verse 6 here this evening. Matthew 5, beginning in verse 3, we read,

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Now the other day, someone that I did not know very well relayed a question pertaining to the preaching on the Beatitudes and on the Sermon on the Mount that was profoundly insightful. This person asked, why would God want us to be sad, poor in spirit and mourning and all of that. Why would God want that? That's a great question. It's a fundamental question that the Sermon on the Mount answers. God would have us mourning, God would have us pour in spirit out of a recognition of the fact that we fall short of his glory, that we are not what he created man to be, that we are rebels and that we have sinned and that there is none righteous, not even one, and to realize that that is not a good state of affairs, that's not the way that things should be. And what we're going to see as we go along is that the person who has been saved, the person that has been redeemed, the person who has been born again by the Spirit, is distinguished by desires that are new and that are at the same time foreign to the old man. Left to our own devices, left to our own righteousness, we would all be miserably lost. We are sinners who have no hope of heaven whatsoever. We have nothing upon which we could approach God and say, "Accept me. Receive me into your heaven." It doesn't work that way. We're all broken, we're all fallen, we're all guilty and condemned sinners by nature and by birth and so this is a desperately difficult problem and the question that Job asked is one that we all need to be conscious of, how can a man be right with God, how can a woman be right with God? There is no other question that matters ultimately, because Jesus himself said, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" And we are so conditioned to think in other ways. We're conditioned not to think about death. We're conditioned to minimize the importance of spiritual things in this materialistic world in which we live in, and certainly there is nothing about the environment around us

that stimulates us to think about the things of God. And yet, obviously, when you step back to think about it at all, what happens to our eternal soul when we die is really the only thing that matters. You know, if our soul is fine when we die and we're ushered by the angels into the presence of God, what does it matter what's happened on this earth? And if we gain 10,000 worlds in this lifetime but die unreconciled to God and then are sent away into eternal condemnation in hell, what have we really gained? And at all points in between on that spectrum, the outcome is still the same. Scripture says it is appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgment, and it is only the fool, and our world is filled with fools like this, it is only the fool that doesn't contemplate his mortality and what will happen to him when he dies. And so we're speaking of matters of great eternal importance. We're not trying to entertain uninterested people, but when we gather together, we're trying to declare the word of God so that men could examine themselves and be reconciled to God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Scripture makes it abundantly clear. If you'll turn to the book of Galatians, and as you're turning to Galatians, put your finger in the book of Ephesians also, just so we can look at a couple of things by way of introduction here. There is a most important verse in Galatians 2:16, that is so emphatic to reinforce the things that I was just saying. In verse 16 we read this, Galatians 2:16, we read this, that "we know that a person is not justified by works of the law." The word justify there means to be declared righteous. God does not accept us on the basis of anything that we do because we've all broken the law, we're all guilty and condemned by the law, and so that there's nothing that we could do by way of our own deeds that would ever put us in a position for God to declare us righteous. You know, once you throw a rock through a window, the window is shattered and cannot be put back together. Once we're born into sin and once we are guilty of sin, the righteousness is shattered and it can never be put back together and so we should not think about God accepting us in any way, on any part, in any basis, on the basis of anything that we do because our guilty hearts, our guilty lives, our fallen states can only produce guilty, fallen works that would never be acceptable for a holy and a righteous God. That's so basic. That's so fundamental. And it's, you know, this is basic biblical doctrine and yet this is the things that we must know if we are to be saved. And I ask you, brothers and sisters, what will happen? What's going to happen to the thousands and millions of people that gather together in churches that are ashamed to preach doctrine? What's going to happen to their souls? What's going to happen to them? They're being led down a path where they think everything is fine, that God likes them, and that sin isn't that serious, and not even taught to contemplate the basis upon which God would receive a sinful man or woman into his presence. How are they ever going to be reconciled to God when they're not taught the basic things that we're considering here this evening? It's really a weighty thing to contemplate, and it's why, you know, we always open the Bible here at Truth Community Church and come to texts like these.

Galatians 2:16, look at it there again, "a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified." I've pointed out to you on many occasions that there's a double-triple emphasis in this verse. Three times Paul says we are not justified by works. Three

times he says that we're justified by faith, which is obviously by faith alone if we're not justified by works at all. So verse 16, again, "a person is not justified by works of the law." There's number 1. Down toward the end of the verse you see, "not by works of the law." That's number 2. "Because by works of the law no one will be justified." We're not supposed to miss this. Paul emphasizes this again and again and again, because it's so vital to understand and because our fallen hearts are so eager to do something to contribute to our salvation so we can take credit for something and Paul says, "No, no, no," and then he points out faith in Christ.

In verse 16, he says, "not justified by works of the law but," number 1, "through faith in Jesus Christ." Number 2, "so we also have believed in Christ Jesus." Number 3, "in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law." Works? "No, no, no." Faith alone? "Yes, yes, yes." You see it emphasized there. God declares sinners righteous when they put their faith in Christ, not after they've reached and attained some kind of level of goodness. Romans 4:5 says that God justifies the ungodly. God justifies men who have no claim of righteousness that they make on their own. That's really important and that's what Jesus is saying in Matthew 5:3 when he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." A person who believes that there's something he's done to contribute to his salvation is a someone who has not yet declared spiritual bankruptcy. He says, "I've got something in my account that I'm going to pay God in response or in exchange for my salvation." And when someone thinks like that, even if they, you know, and they qualify it, "Well, you know, yeah, I know I'm not perfect, but I'm not that bad. The good outweighs the bad." Beloved, that is someone who is telling you in so many words, "I'm not a Christian because I don't understand the first thing about justification by faith alone. I think my works make me acceptable to God."

You see this emphasized also in Ephesians 2, familiar verse, turn there with me at the next book to the right in your hard copy Bible. Ephesians 2:8 and 9. This is all just by way of introduction for what we need to consider here this evening. In Ephesians 2:8, we read it is, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Again, Paul just emphasizes this again and again and again. It is not your own doing. It is not as a result of works. No one may boast. Beloved, what I'm about to say may surprise some of you, but it's not even our faith that saves us. It's not our faith that provides the righteousness by which God accepts us. Faith is simply the vessel, is the means by which we receive Christ, who is our righteousness, Christ who is the righteousness that satisfies the demands of God. Our faith is weak, our faith is imperfect, our faith could never be that which is the basis upon which God accepts us. Faith is simply that which lays hold of Christ, and Christ, his righteousness is the exchange given to us so that God accepts us on the basis of who Christ is and on what Christ has done, not on anything in ourselves, so that there's nothing for us to boast about.

Now think about this. with me just for a little bit longer. If our faith was our righteousness, then we would have something to boast in because the other person doesn't get saved, and I do get saved, and if it's because of my faith, then my faith, something inside me, something that I do or exercise distinguishes me from the other person. That's

not the case. I have nothing to boast in. Our boast is in Christ, in the cross of Christ, and it is his righteousness, it is God laying his hand on us and drawing us to himself that is our only hope and so it's just very important for us to have these things clearly in our minds. Salvation is a gift of God, and he draws us to Christ in salvation.

Now, having established that point, what happens when a man is born again? What happens when God imparts new life to him? That is the aspect of the overall gift of salvation that we are talking about tonight. We are not talking about how a man becomes a Christian, we're talking about the mark of someone who is a Christian, someone whom God has saved. And you're there in Ephesians 2 and what we want to look at here in verse 10, still by way of introduction, is this, "For we are his workmanship," salvation is something that God has done, not that we have done to ourselves, not that we present to God, but that he gives to us, we are his workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." God saved you so that you would embark on a new walk in life to become the person and to do the things that he has called you to do. Those things are not the basis on which God saves you, they're not the basis of your righteousness, they are the fruit of your salvation that is in one manner or another true of everyone who has ever been saved. There is no such thing as a Christian whose life does not change. You are born again if you are in Christ. You have new life within you, and that new life naturally and essentially and necessarily must manifest itself in heart attitudes and in a changed life, which are the good works flowing from the new birth that Paul speaks of there in verse 10.

Now, in like manner, you don't need to turn there, but I just want to read to you Titus 2:14. Listen as I read verse 14 of Titus 2. Speaking of Christ, it says he "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." They are zealous for good works. There is a zeal, there is an inner passion within them that desires the works, that desires to do and believe and say the things which glorify the God who saved them. They're zealous for that. There is an inner desire for that that is the mark of every true believer.

Now, beloved, go back to Matthew 5 with that introduction. We've been saying that we see in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus' description of what true repentance looks like. Stated differently, Jesus is showing us the marks of the new birth. When God imparts new life to a man and draws him to saving faith in Christ, what, here's the question, what is the result of that? What happens inside that man when he is saved? What is the fruit by which we recognize that work in the person's heart? Well, I'll avoid another tangent and just keep going here. We can say this, is that the new birth brings about new affections in the heart. The new birth gives rise to new desires in the heart that are foreign to the unsaved man. They are the mark of the fruit of the Holy Spirit who now indwells the believer, and our text shows that today. Verse 6 again, look at Matthew 5:6 here as we read once again, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Jesus is describing someone who is in the kingdom of God. We see that from verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." He's describing people who are citizens of the kingdom, children in the family of God, those who have been born again. He's describing people like that. He's describing his true

disciples here and distinguishing them from the world, the world which does not desire righteousness, which does not seek for God, which does not understand. This is the mark of the unsaved man, that they do not understand, that they do not seek God. What you read here in the Beatitudes is a description of someone who is completely different from that, who does not belong to the spiritual realm of this world.

And so with that introduction and the context of the Beatitudes and the full teaching of Scripture, beloved, just understand before we get to explaining what lies in this text, that Jesus is not calling for good works to somehow earn your salvation. That can't possibly be the case. That's not what he's describing. He has been speaking about a man or a woman who grieves over their lack of righteousness. He describes someone who acknowledges spiritual bankruptcy; as we saw last week, someone who is meek, someone who trusts God, who has spiritual composure in the midst of conflict and adversity, trusting God and learning from him and submitting to him as he goes along in life. Somebody who's repentant. Now, beloved, if repentance simply defined is someone who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, has genuinely turned away from sin and turned to Christ for righteousness with the whole of their inner man, "I reject sin, I reject myself, I turn to Christ who alone for my righteousness," if that spiritual transaction, that spiritual change has genuinely taken place, then there's something obvious that would flow from that, something undeniable. A truly repentant man, a truly repentant woman will desire the things of God. They will desire the things of God. If God, a holy God, a righteous God, who redeems us in order to purify for himself a possession of his own people, zealous for good works, if that's the goal of God in salvation, to produce a people zealous for good works, and from the human level, if someone has thoroughly turned from sin and now embraces Christ and desires him, beloved, is it not obvious that a truly repentant person will desire the things of God going forward? I'm not saying that it's without conflict, it's not without mixed motives, it's not without a struggle, but somewhere in the heart of a truly redeemed person is this desire that pulsates that says, "I want the righteousness of God. I want to know him. I want to be like him. I want to live a life that pleases him. I desire his word. I want to understand the things of God." And this just flows out of the heart because a new fountain has been put into place. The Spirit of God indwells that person, has given them new life, and continually urges them in that direction.

So what we want to look at from this verse is just two simple points here this evening. First of all, we want to look at this hunger for righteousness, this hunger for righteousness of which Jesus speaks. Look at verse 6 with me again as we keep the text fresh in our minds, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." What Jesus is using here are ordinary words for basic bodily desires. "I'm hungry. I'm thirsty." You know immediately what that means, someone needs something to eat; someone needs something to drink, as the words hunger and thirst are typically used in ordinary daily life. Well, the brilliance of the teaching of Christ is he takes those easily understood words and those natural urges that everyone experiences on a physical level, and he takes that which we readily understand, and he transfers it to the spiritual realm and what he's saying is that his disciples are hungry and thirsty but not for food and water, they're hungry and thirsty for spiritual things and he uses that sense of desire to

teach truth about the spiritual realm. "I hunger and I thirst for righteousness," the redeemed person can say. And we can phrase it this way, holiness is the great longing for someone who has truly been saved by a holy God. "I desire holiness." What does that mean and how can you kind of take a glance, a look inside your heart, and say, is this true of me, what Scripture describes? What is holiness and what is it that this righteousness is that the true disciple longs for, what he desires? Well, let's just keep it really simple tonight. The true disciple of Christ at the bottom core of his being, whatever the struggle may be for it, inside there is a desire for him that truly wants to avoid sin and to live righteously. That's a fundamental desire for righteousness. "I want to live," the true disciple says, "I want to live in accordance with the will of God as he has revealed it in his word. I desire to know him. I desire to know Christ. I want to know him more than I want life itself. It isn't simply a matter of behavior. I want to know this holy person who gave himself on the cross for my sins. Who would do that? I must know him. He's applied that gift to my heart. I must love him." That kind of righteousness, beloved, not the kind of external legalistic focus that is simply putting on a show for men to applaud so that the people around you will think you're righteous regardless of what's actually happening in your heart. That's not what Christ is talking about at all. This is not a text that would lead anyone to any kind of hypocrisy like that. This is the genuine article deep in the heart of one who says, "I belong to the kingdom of God and I want to conform my life to that. I want to be faithful to Christ. I want to understand his word. I want to live a life that's pleasing to him." And not that a true disciple would ever want this, but to state something contrary to fact, to state an impossibility just to illustrate the point, you couldn't kill that desire in your heart if you wanted to. "I can't make that desire go away. It keeps coming back, making its claims on me. It keeps urging its demands upon me. It convicts me when I stray and I don't want to go there. I want to confess my sin. I want to purge myself of this hypocrisy and unrighteousness and get back on the narrow path." This kind of righteousness embraces the fact that the path is narrow that leads to life, that does not resist or contest the demands of God on his life. He says, "Well, of course, of course, I would want to do what God wants me to do. He saved me. He loves me. He's my heavenly Father. How could I want anything other than what he wants," the redeemed heart cries out.

And so, beloved, what Jesus is saying here is that just as physical hunger and physical thirst stay with a man throughout his natural life, so, in like manner, the desire for godliness on an ongoing basis marks the life of the one who is truly born again. This, in part, is how we recognize, sadly, the difference between false and true Christians because a false Christian, one who makes a profession for a time and then falls away, turns back to a life of sin and wickedness and embraces that and forsakes their confession of Christ, whatever else was happening in them, was not true conversion, because the true convert stays and perseveres because the Holy Spirit is working in them. God started a work in them, and the work that God starts, God finishes, Philippians 1:6, "I'm confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." And so someone who turns away from what appeared to be a pursuit of righteousness, we understand that in the light of 1 John 2:19, "they went out from us but they were not really of us, for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us, but they went out in order that it might be shown that they are not all of us." Jesus said

there will be tares in the midst of the wheat, that which looks like wheat, but when it comes to fruition is not the real thing.

Scripture says this over and over again and so that's why we insist upon the fact that it is only those who have this ongoing living hunger and thirst for righteousness that are true believers. The desire to appear righteous is not the same thing as desiring righteousness itself and so, beloved, I love you enough to ask you the question directly: do you have spiritual desires like that? Do you know something about this, of desiring to turn away from evil, of hating sin, even when it does come up in your life? Do you know something about hating sin and desiring Christ? Of desiring him? Of longing for him, for fellowship with him, to know his word, to be in prayer, to know his love, to know his forgiveness, to glorify him, to turn spontaneously to him and offer him your praise? Do you know something like that? That's the kind of righteousness Jesus is describing here and truly saved men have that in them.

What kind of righteousness? What does that righteousness look like? Well, let me put it this way. Let me put it this way. I think that some of these things are just so plain and obvious that it's difficult to miss it. If Jesus really wants us to understand this, then you would expect that as he goes along in the Sermon on the Mount, that he would give us some kind of an indication of what this righteousness looks like, right? What does this righteousness look like? Well, I'm just going to choose portions, neglecting really important things and saving them for another time, just choosing random things to give you a sense of it. Among other things, when Christ calls you to this kind of righteousness, the kind of righteousness that the Spirit produces, one of the aspects of it is that it is profoundly sincere. Look at chapter 6, verse 1. Chapter 6, verse 1, Jesus, who's called us to righteousness, who in chapter 6, verse 33, will say seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Here in verse 1, he talks about sincerity and turning away from hypocrisy. He says in Matthew 6:1, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven." The righteousness of which Christ speaks is a righteousness that one seeks to practice in the privacy of his own home. For example, it's the righteousness that is practiced when no one is watching, that there is a continuity of desire between who I'm perceived to be in public and what I actually am in private, so that this righteousness is lived out and practiced as something unto God, not as unto men. So that, we read in chapter 6, verse 4, let's read verse 3, "when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Jesus says, drawing upon verse 2, he says, "Don't give in a manner that calls attention to yourself so that others will praise you and say what a good person you are, look at how much you give." I always think of this passage when I go to hospitals and see the So-and-so Markowitz wing of the hospital and the big plaque that thanks the Markowitz's for their lovely gift that made this wing possible. Where's the sense of doing this unto God and doing it so that men don't praise us? Jesus says the same thing about prayer in verse 6. He says, "when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." And in verse 18 he says the same thing about fasting. He says, "Do your fasting so that it's not seen by others but

by your Father who is in secret and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." All of this just an indication that our worship is to be sincere, done unto God, not to make an impression upon men.

What else does this righteousness look like? It's a trusting righteousness. Verse 25 of chapter 6, Jesus says, "I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Do you not trust God enough to provide for your needs? If he feeds a bird, won't he feed you, disciple of Christ? Don't you recognize that you forsake your anxiety in order to trust him? Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Christ calls us to reject hypocrisy, reject sinful anger, reject sinful lust, reject retaliation, love your enemies as well as your friends. He's calling you to aspire after the righteousness of God himself. Look at chapter 5, verse 48, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Now, here's the key and, you know, I know some of you well enough to know that you're already feeling weighed down because you're not perfect in these things. Here's the key for grasping this hunger and thirst for righteousness that Jesus is describing. We've just seen portions of illustrations of what that righteousness looks like through the words of Jesus in the context of the same sermon. Here's the key for grasping it. You say, "But I'm not perfect. I do get anxious. I am at times a hypocrite. I do at times get angry. There is at times a distinction, an inconsistency between my private life and what I want people to see and what I present to others." We're all there, right? One way or another, there's a gap there that we all feel the weight of. Here's the key for grasping this hunger and thirst for righteousness that you must understand, it must be in your heart. If you're a true Christian, it will be there. If it's not there, that's a sign of spiritual death. And yet, what about these inconsistencies and these besetting sins that we deal with? Here's the point. Here's the whole point of it all: even though while he walks in this earth, the true Christian is conscious of falling short of the righteousness of God, even as he's in Christ, he's conscious of falling short, he looks at this righteousness that we've been describing and he says, "That's good. That's noble. I want that even though I lack it. I desire that. If I could only get rid of this dark clinging force inside me. If I could only get rid of that and live freely for the fulfillment and the pursuit of that righteousness. That would be life to me. I desire it, even though I'm weighed down by something inside me that keeps me from fulfilling it perfectly." I see steps in that direction. I see a change in the well-stated words of a former prayer, I'm not what I used to be. I'm not all that I should be. I'm not all that I will be. But thank God, I am not what I used to be. There's been a change. I'm not all that I should be. Now I'm speaking autobiographically here. I'm not all that I should be, and neither are you but I want that righteousness that Christ describes. I want that righteousness that Christ embodies. I want Christ himself. I want to see him more than I want anything in life. I'm not there yet. I haven't arrived. I'm not yet perfect but one thing that is true, I'm not what I used to be. There has been a change. Before, I didn't care anything about these things. Now, there's this relentless urging in me that pushes me to Christ. Even as it seems to ebb and flow, it never goes away. There is a relentless force in

the ocean that I don't pretend to understand but there is this relentless force in the ocean that you see every time you go to a beach, the waves are continually being driven to the sand, right? The waves are always coming in. The tide goes out and it comes back in. It's always like that. That force is always there in operation. Well, in a greater way, a far more wonderful and majestic way, there is this relentless urging that sometimes we're more conscious of it than others but there is this desire in the heart of the truly redeemed that says, "I want to be like Christ. I want to know him. I want to live righteously, even though I don't." That's what Christ is talking about.

Charles Spurgeon said this about that righteousness, desire for righteousness and I quote the Prince of Preachers here again this evening. He said this, "This desire toward righteousness is not a faint one, which feebly says, 'I wish I could be righteous.' It is a longing which, like hunger and thirst, abides with a man and masters him. He carries it to his work, carries it to his house, carries it to his bed, carries it wherever he himself goes, for that desire for righteousness rules him with its imperative demands." This desire rules a man, the truly saved man, the truly saved woman. You can't, you couldn't get away from it if you tried and you wouldn't try because it's what you most want in life above all else.

It's pretty searching, isn't it, but it's what Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." That's the mark of one who's in the kingdom of God. Beloved, do you know something of that desire? Then Jesus says that you are blessed, you have been on the receiving end of divine favor. God has been good to you. God has done a work in your heart that not everyone has received because whereas before you loved sin and desired sin and pursued it, now you have a different mastering desire, a different fundamental principle that guides the force of your life. That's true Christianity. A complete interchange. Does it sound too high? Does it sound too lofty? It's only the basic teaching of Scripture. 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man is in Christ," what? "He's a new creature, a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, new things have come." There's a newness that leads into an abiding desire that can never be quenched and Jesus says you're blessed if you have that.

Now, beloved, when the word of God speaks like this to us, it's unavoidable that it would fall on ears who would respond like this, like what I'm about to say. "That's not true of me, but I don't care. There must be something else. It can't be that bad. I'm too busy. I don't really care. I don't want to pursue it, but I'm okay. I have to be okay even though what Scripture describes about a truly redeemed person, in my heart I know isn't true about me." And so, the word of God is turned upside down in order to justify a man or a woman continuing to live in sin without letting the full convicting work of the Holy Spirit have the fruit that he intends, stiff-necked and resisting the Spirit of God, even though it's plainly laid out in Scripture that this is what God does in the hearts of everyone who's truly redeemed. It's no argument that that's not true by saying, "But there aren't many people like that in the church. You look at the mass of Christianity, of people who broadly claim to be Christians, there aren't that many like them. There must be something wrong with the teaching because if that's true, then it means a lot of people aren't really saved and I don't believe that," someone might say. Beloved, that's just the argument of a

fool. You don't measure the truth and the implications of Scripture by what you see in men around you. You let the word of God speak for itself and let the consequences fall where they may. We don't measure the truth by the vastness of the consequences if we actually take it seriously.

Do I need to say this again? I guess I do as it comes to mind, in the act of preaching. Jesus said, "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not...!' and I'll declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" Matthew 7:21 to 23. Many. I can't get away from that word. I know I've said this to you in the past few months many times. I've said many, many times in this very context because it so burdens my heart as I look out on faces that I love. It burdens my heart as I look out on the church that claims the name of Christ and is so impotent and ugly in every spiritual respect that you could measure, broadly speaking. How can you explain that if most everybody is saved? You can't. You can't explain that. You can't explain the fruit by saying the root is good when the fruit is bad. Jesus says you'll know the tree by the fruit it produces. And so when we look at what Jesus says about desiring and hungering and thirsting for righteousness, and we have to honestly say there aren't a whole lot of people like that, then we're just driven to agree with Jesus in advance that says, "Man, there must be many who are going to be turned away at the end." And what a sad, catastrophic outcome that is. We don't avoid the catastrophic outcome by minimizing and twisting what Scripture says in order to avoid the implications of the consequences. We see what Scripture says, we say, "Yes, this is right. Yes, this is biblical. Yes, this is obviously the way it should be. This is the way it must be. And if that's the case, and I don't see," you say to yourself, "I see so little of it around me in the world in which I live, then this is really sad." This is urgent that we call upon the Spirit of God to fall upon those who name the name of Christ and convict them and change them and bring genuine revival, not a revival in the sense that we're going to schedule something for six nights of meetings six months in advance because we know the Holy Spirit's going to show up then. No, not that kind of revival. Not a manufactured, man-centered, man-produced thing, the real thing of the Spirit of God coming down upon people and impressing upon their hearts the truth of these things while there's still time and saving many who realize, "This doesn't describe me. I'm in danger. I must flee to Christ."

Beloved, we do no one any favors by pretending that it's any different than what it is. We do no one any favors by softening and dulling the edges of the clear teaching of Christ and the soul that is convicted by this does itself no favors by brushing it aside and going on as if a wind from the Spirit of God through the word of God didn't just blow across your face. Doesn't do anybody any good to pretend. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, beloved, is teaching for keeps. He means what he says and he says that, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they and they alone will be satisfied." If the desire is not there, the Spirit is not there.

Well, after all of that searching, it would be good to have something encouraging on the other side and that's precisely what Jesus does in the beautiful balance of his teaching. Point number 2 for this evening. We've seen the hunger for righteousness and now point number 2, we see the satisfaction of hunger. The satisfaction of hunger and, beloved,

understand this, for as much as we must emphasize the desire and the importance of the presence of the desire, understand this, Jesus is not describing a life of spiritual frustration here in the Beatitudes whatsoever. No, it's not a life of frustration and continual guilt and a sense of condemnation, because Scripture tells us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. This is a life of satisfaction, Jesus says. Look at verse 6 with me again, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Satisfied. This, again, the brilliance of the simplicity of Jesus' teaching is just astonishing to me. The word satisfied is the word that's used elsewhere in Scripture to describe that sense of fulfillment that one has after he's eaten a meal. You know the feeling. You come to the table hungry. You eat a good meal. "Ah, I feel better now. That's good." Satisfied describes that kind of fulfillment. When Jesus fed the 5,000, in Matthew 14:20, you don't need to turn there, Matthew 14:20, when Jesus literally fed the 5,000 with literal bread, Scripture says they all ate and they were satisfied. They were satisfied. They were no longer hungry. They had what they needed. Their desire had been quenched. Their hunger yielded to contentment.

Now, that's what Jesus is describing here in a spiritual sense in verse 6. In a similar way, those that have those spiritual longings for righteousness like we've been discussing here this evening, do you know what God does in his grace and mercy? He who stimulates the desires in our hearts meets them. He provides what we need so that those desires would be satisfied. He saves us from our lack of desire. He puts a new spirit within us that brings forth desires for things that we don't have. And then God graciously supplies the urgings. It's a work of his from beginning to end to awaken the desires, to sustain the desires, to meet the desires. I love him. Don't you? Isn't this wonderful, to know that God is like that?

There's two aspects to this satisfaction of hunger. Number 1 is a sense of present satisfaction, and then secondly, future satisfaction, and we'll try to get through this in a few quick moments here, as time is once again not our friend. Present satisfaction, and as we're talking about the fullness of biblical salvation, beloved, please do not miss the most obvious and most important point, those desires for righteousness, where are they satisfied? Where do they find their ultimate fulfillment, I ask you? The ultimate fulfillment of our desires for righteousness is not in anything that we do, it's everything in who Christ is. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says that Christ is our righteousness, our sanctification, our wisdom. Christ is our righteousness. To know Christ is to know perfect righteousness. To know him, to be on the receiving end of his love and responding to his love, responding to his goodness, knowing that no one shall pluck us out of his hands, that is the ultimate fulfillment of righteousness. That is the one place where it can all be satisfied is in him, that there is one, that there is a man, there is the Son of God who is perfectly righteous himself, who shares his righteousness with me and takes my unrighteousness away and washed it away at the cross. Jesus, thy blood and righteousness, my glory, my dress, they are, he is.

And so God in salvation credits the righteousness of Christ to our account. God accepts you because Christ is righteousness, and in that you have your rest. In him, in him alone, are all those desires met and satisfied in the ultimate glorious sense and yet we still thirst

and we thirst for righteousness in this life, in this mortal flesh, because our lives, our living, our day-to-day practice falls short of our position in Christ. We know in him perfect righteousness. We know in ourselves of falling short. We still struggle with the world, with the devil, with our flesh. We know the weight and force of opposition internally, externally.

Look over at Philippians 3. This should encourage you. Philippians 3 in this context as we let Scripture interpret Scripture, as is so important to do. The Apostle Paul was once filled with self-righteousness, self-glory. He describes that in Philippians 3:4 through 6 but he disowns it in verse 7. He says, "whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ." Now watch what he goes on to say and how it fits with everything that we've been saying here this evening. "Indeed, I count everything as loss," everything about my prior life, everything that I thought was a credit in my account of righteousness before God, I realize it was all a debt. It was all loss. It was all dung. Verse 8, "I count everything as loss," everything about myself I count as loss "because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Everything about my self-righteousness I reject and count as worthless in light of knowing Christ himself. He goes on to say in verse 8, "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." Notice he's talking about the person of Christ, not simply what Paul does in response to his salvation. "The person himself is what I know, is what I love, is what I cherish, is what I treasure. He is my gain. He is my righteousness."

Verse 9, I may "be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law," this is everything we introduced it with, beloved, everything we started with tonight, "not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." He says, "I long for Christ. He is my righteousness. He's the fulfillment of everything." And there's this full, complete satisfaction in Christ right now in his present experience and yet, and yet he yearned for something more. There was a hunger and thirst that was still operative in the midst of knowing Christ as he did.

Verse 12, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect." I haven't arrived, Paul says. Paul, the apostle. Paul, the one stopped on the road to Damascus. Paul who went to the third heaven. Paul says, "I have not already obtained this. I'm not already perfect but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do," here's the hunger and thirst, beloved, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." I know Christ. I'm satisfied in him and yet, in my personal life, there's something that hasn't fully arrived yet and rather than accepting that, I'm striving for what still lies ahead. Paul is satisfied in Christ, and yet he's still hungry for Christ, for practical righteousness. That's our experience on earth, beloved. The fact that you fall short is not an indication that you are not saved. What shows that you're not saved is that you don't have the desire in the first place.

Now, there's also a future dimension to the satisfaction. Go back to Matthew 5 as we are just about done for this evening. It's sad to be in this realm and to contemplate these great things of Christ and to realize that we've got to part ways and draw it to a close. You get into this realm and you just want to stay there, don't you? This realm of Christ and the contemplation of him and all that he's done for us and all that he is and his glory and his majesty and your mind is there and you don't want to pull it out. Verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," notice the future tense, "for they shall be satisfied." We have a present satisfaction in Christ, but there's more to come and what Jesus is doing here in verse 6 is he is bidding us, he is calling us, he is urging us to endure the tension patiently for what is still to come. In other words, in the midst of the tension of knowing Christ and being satisfied with him and yet I press on because I haven't yet arrived, endure that tension patiently because there is something better to come. There is more still ahead. Beloved, our final satisfaction, our full satisfaction, it's still future. It's not for this life.

For example, at the Last Supper in Matthew 26, Jesus told his disciples, "I will not drink this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." I'm not going to drink this vine again, Jesus said, until I drink it with you, with you in my Father's kingdom. Christ is delaying something so that we can share it together with him. Isn't that wonderful? We have a coming banquet with our King. We will see him face-to-face. Scripture says we'll be transformed into his likeness. There will be no more sin inside or outside to distract us. There will be no earthly cares or anxieties or problems or sickness and sorrows to detract from it all. Somehow we're going to be at a banquet with our Lord and everything's going to be right and everything is going to be absolutely perfect. And when that moment comes, we're not going to have that awkward sense that you're at a wedding and everybody seems happy, but you feel out of place. I feel that way at weddings when I'm the pastor doing the wedding. But here at this banquet, no one's going to feel that way because of the love of Christ, because of his work on our behalf, because of his perfect faithfulness to us. When we sit down at that banquet and figuratively speaking, at least I think it's figurative, you're sitting down and there's a gold plate at your setting with your name engraved on it, and you sit down there and you're going to say, "I belong here. This is wonderful! This is everything I hoped for and infinitely more! I'm so glad I'm here! This is so joyful! There are no enemies of Christ to be found. God has settled all the accounts. He's done all things well and now Christ is going to raise the cup because we're with him. This is perfect," you're going to say. This is absolutely perfect. and every desire for righteousness that you've ever had, every desire for intimacy with Christ, every desire for comfort in the sorrows and afflictions and conflicts of life, they're all going to find their perfect fulfillment in that great day when we are at the banquet with our Lord. Our longings will be met. Having hunger and thirst for righteousness in this life, beloved, in that future moment, I promise you we will be perfectly satisfied. Scripture says the one who believes in him will not be disappointed, that there is no way that you can think thoughts that are lofty enough to correspond to what that reality will be. You let your imagination run wild and if somehow you recalled your imagination when you're actually there at the banquet, when you're actually with Christ, the only thing that would possibly come to your mind is,

"This is infinitely better than I thought. This is perfect. It couldn't be any better. Lord, let's eat." The Apostle Peter said according to his promise, we are looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Beloved, I ask you, have I described your hope? Is this what you live for? Will that day of the great banquet of the Lamb be the greatest day of your existence? Is the final victory of Christ your great desire? Beloved, based on the word of Christ, let me assure you, you are blessed. You are the privileged recipient of divine favor and God will certainly grant the desire of your heart.

Let's pray.

Father, if these things weren't in your word, we would be unwilling to think such lofty thoughts about the goodness that you have stored up for those that you've redeemed. Father, we long for that day of full, final, future satisfaction and pray that, Lord Jesus, that you would come quickly for we desire to depart and be with Christ, for that's very much better. But while we wait, Lord, as we struggle at times in the flesh, as we fall short of your glory, as we stumble in many ways, help our hearts find rest in Christ in his abiding perfect love, in the perfect sacrifice of his shed blood that washes away all of our sin, of the righteousness of his that's credited to our account knowing that we are fully accepted in the Beloved. O God. God, whether we contemplate Christ in this life and we look at him and we say that satisfies everything, and then yet we look to the future and we see that somehow while having Christ now is perfect, somehow you're going to make perfection even better. Hasten the day, O God. Hasten the day and may the glory of that day be used by your Spirit to call sinners away from the filth and grime of their inner life, the sin and degradation of this world, and the judgment and wrath that is upon it. Father, may the glory of what is to come be that which draws them out of sin, draws them to repentance, to turn and embrace Christ, and to follow him all the days of their lives. Whether young or old, Father, whatever the case may be, draw men to yourself, and for those of us that know you, perfect the work, complete the work that you've begun in us as we long for that day when we sit down at the banquet table, a nameplate guaranteeing that our place has been reserved, that we belong there, and that we could rejoice with our Lord at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Great, great things, Lord, that you have in store for those who love you. May everyone under the sound of my voice one day soon, one day far away, Father, whatever the case may be, may all under the sound of my voice partake in that great blessing from the hand of your Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.