*Introduction*

We return this morning to the Sermon on the Mount, and after this morning we will find ourselves at the halfway point of the “Blessed are those....” beatitudes.

To quickly recap, we have seen so far that Jesus is talking to his disciples, and therefore to Christians and NOT unbelievers. Jesus is talking to us, teaching us.

We have also seen that each one leads on to the next and they are all in a particular and logical sequence, they are not haphazard, but deliberately placed in order.

Over the weeks since starting this important discipleship series, for that is what it is, a course in how to be a disciple of Jesus we have found that those who are poor in spirit know that they are sinful, nothing without Christ, we are lost and helpless. Without Christ we are destined for hell. We also found that when we recognise this fact we should repent of our sin and mourn over it, realising the price that was paid for our salvation. Thirdly we saw that we were to be meek. Meekness is not being a doormat for everyone to walk over, the men who were looked upon as meek were people like Moses, David and of course Jesus, none of whom were pushovers, but were strong and full of courage. Yet as we look at Jesus we see a man who was gentle and lowly.

The rewards of these three beatitudes are: the Kingdom of Heaven, comfort and we will inherit the earth.

All three of these were, in effect, quite negative, they were showing us our problem. Today we look at the beatitude:

***MT 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.***

The problem with the world today and throughout history, according to the Gospel is sin, not a particular sin, but rather sin itself. As we look around us we see wars, we see poverty, we see inhumanity, we see self centeredness.

We can spend all day, helping to eliminate poverty, speaking against wars but actually nothing will change, until we do.

What the world needs to do is hunger and thirst after righteousness.

If every human being knew what it was to hunger and thirst after righteousness., all these problems would be solved.

Well, realistically, as much as we would all like it to happen, it won’t. So then it is down to the Christian to make a difference by hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Remember, as we look at this verse, what we said in the beginning, the beatitudes are not ‘optional extras’ like you get on a budget airline, where you buy your ticket and then choose the add on’s. NO these are the attitudes that every Christian is expected to display.

Let us for our remaining time then, consider this verse.

The first word we come to is ‘**blessed**’ or happy are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness. They are the only truly happy people.

Now the whole world is seeking happiness, there is no question about that. Everybody wants to be happy. I have never met a person yet who wants to be sad. There have been many I have met who are sad, but they don’t want to be sad.

Happiness is the great motive behind everything the world does, and if we are truly honest, what we as Christians do as well.

The tragedy is that although the world seeks it, it is never able to find it.

The problem with the world, and tragically for many in the Church too, is that we have misread this verse.

What I mean by that is that we are not called to hunger and thirst for blessing or happiness, yet that is what we do, and therefore we never get there, no matter what we do.

As Christians the scriptures never tell us to seek happiness, but that happiness comes as a result of seeking something else.

So if you are seeking happiness by following a lifelong dream, by getting that top job, or by earning lots of cash and having lots of things, you will never attain true happiness.

Happiness comes by hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Let me give you an analogy before we move on.

A man is suffering pain due to a serious disease. His main desire is to be relieved of his pain, we understand that. The one thing that person wants to do is relieve his pain. If the doctor who is looking after the patient is also only concerned with relieving the pain, he is a bad doctor.

The doctor’s primary duty is to discover the source of the pain and to treat it.

Pain is a wonderful symptom which is provided to call our attention to disease.

So if the doctor treats the pain, all may seem very well, the patient is out of pain. But the cause of the pain is still there.

The world wants to treat its pain, the pain caused by its sinful state. It says “I want to get rid of my pain” so it runs to the pictures, or to drink, or anything that will help it forget the pain. But the question is “What is the cause of the pain and the unhappiness and the wretchedness?” They are hungering and thirsting after happiness and not righteousness.

The righteousness that comes from knowing Christ and forgiveness of sin.

Many in the Church are hungering and thirsting after ‘experiences’. They go from meeting to meeting, convention to convention, hoping to get this wonderful experience that will give them joy.

I have been there. I was seeking gifts thinking that they would make me a better Christian, a more fulfilled Christian, a happy Christian.

I have seen many Christians who go to big Churches that they claim are “Alive”, they go to receive the equivalent of a “Toronto blessing” and on Sundays they are full of it, they fall on the floor, they howl like a dog, but see them on Monday morning.

We are to hunger and thirst after righteousness, not after the blessing.

**What does this righteousness mean?**

Paul says in the book of Romans

***ROM 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."***

***RO 3:21-24 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.***

Here he connects righteousness with justification. When we are saved by Christ we take on His righteousness, we are in Gods eyes righteous from that moment.

But Paul goes on to say

***1TI 6:11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.***

***2TI 2:22 Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.***

***2TIM 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

***HEB 5:13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.***

Might I suggest this morning that it means more than justification. That it also means sanctification.

In other words, when we come to Christ we are made righteous in Gods eyes, but this beatitude shows us that we should then hunger and thirst in our desire to be free from sin in all its forms and manifestations.

Therefore we should hunger and thirst in our desire to be right with God, a desire to get rid of sin, because it is sin that comes between us and God, keeping us from the knowledge of God, and all that we are and can be with God.

If we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we should be hungering for the relationship that Adam and Eve had before the fall, where He dwelt and walked with them. That should be our desire.

Paul was a man who talked of the battle within him between the old man and the new man. The old man tried to thwart all the good he wanted to do so that he failed.

We are no different to Paul, when we examine ourselves we see that we to are still in bondage to sin, the even more horrible fact is that we like it and want it.

How often do we take our sin to God and repent only to return to it. Praise God that he is a patient and forgiving God – Amen!

Let me try and sum up what hungering and thirsting after righteousness is:

To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to desire to be free from self in all its horrible manifestations, in all its forms.

It is a longing to be positively holy.

To hunger and thirst means that we want to :

Demonstrate the beatitudes in our daily lives,

To show the fruit of the Spirit in our actions

Have fellowship and walk with God and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

It should be at the top of our list – every day. To be like Christ.

**What does it mean to hunger and thirst?**

Well it does not mean that we do it in our own strength, after all Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee above all Pharisees, and he considered that all ‘dung’ in order to know Christ.

Well, the Psalmist sums it up quite nicely by saying

***PS 42:1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?***

We need to be desperate in our need for God and to have fellowship with Him, so desperate that it hurts, just like starving gets to that point where it hurts.

When I first became diabetic but had not been diagnosed I became thirsty, I had an unquenchable thirst. On one occasion when i was at work I was so thirsty that I went to the corner shop and brought a litre bottle of coke and a litre bottle of lemonade and a pint of milk.

I drank them down one after the other, and at the end of it, my thirst was still unquenched.

It didn’t help that the coke and the lemonade were full of sugar that made things worse.

But actually, that is the point, we should desire God and his righteousness so much that after we have drunk some of him we still desperately want more.

*Conclusion*

Lastly, let us look at what is promised for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

**For they will be filled**

We are blessed – happy, to be congratulated, when we hunger and thirst after righteousness, why? Because “They will be filled”, we will be filled.

Can you remember when you came to know Christ, when you knew your sins were forgiven and that he had come into your heart – you were happy, you walked 10 feet in the air.

Because you hungered and thirsted after the righteousness that come from knowing Christ you were filled ‘straight away’ at your conversion.

But, over the years that hunger for Christ has, let us be honest here, diminished, some perhaps, to the point of weariness.

Our God of grace, our Heavenly Father wants you to experience all that he can offer, and he offers us a banquet beyond compare and understanding. But to receive it, we have to want it, NO! We have to hunger and thirst for it!

The Christian life is one of being filled and yet at one and the same time hungering and thirsting for more, and the more he is filled the more he should hunger and thirst – FOR MORE!

Are you filled? Are you blessed in this sense? Are you hungering and thirsting?

Those are the questions.

This is the gracious, glorious promise of God to all :

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled”

Amen

Let us pray.