

Blessed are Those who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

Matthew 5:6

Small Group Guide

Opening Icebreaker Question:

- Part of what we will discuss today is food, so what is your favorite food and what makes it so satisfying?

OPTIONAL BACKGROUND READING/INTRO: We are in the middle of a summer message series called “Happiness.” We’re looking at the preamble (The Beatitudes) to the most famous sermon ever given, Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes are eight paradoxical statements about what brings true happiness or blessedness.

This week we’re looking at the fourth Beatitude in **Matthew 5:6. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”**

1. Andy’s first observation about this passage is that Jesus is saying that the happy ones in life are those who are HUNGRY AND THIRSTY for righteousness, not the ones who ARE righteous! What’s your first reaction to hearing this?
2. Andy mentioned that the word “righteousness” appears over 200 times in the Bible, so it must be important. But what is this righteousness?¹
3. Consider the statement Jesus makes a few breaths into the Sermon on the Mount: “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” What does this indicate about God’s standard for righteousness? So, what are the implications of this standard?
4. Let’s discuss how one goes about hungering and thirsting for righteousness.
 - a. The Greek word for hunger here was the same word just a few chapters earlier in Matthew’s gospel to describe Jesus fasting in the desert: “For 40 days and 40 nights he fasted, and he became very hungry” (Matthew 4:2). What are the implications of this understanding?
 - b. Andy says that the Greek word for filled, *chartazomai*, has less the connotation of being satisfied and more of being STUFFED! How would you describe your actual “hunger” for the righteousness of God? Do you seek to be satisfied or STUFFED? Discuss.
 - c. God promised us in Psalm 81: “I am the Lord Your God, who brought you out of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it!” So, how can we seek to be STUFFED? How can we open our mouths wide?
5. The reward at the end of the statement is “being filled.” How is it that Jesus can promise that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled? Why is “being filled” in this way such a great blessing?

¹ Andy’s working definition was “*behavior necessary for a relationship to be healthy, or in right standing*. Both parties in the relationship must contribute this behavior for the success of the relationship.... obedience, faithfulness to the other half in the relationship.” For example, in their relationship, parents provide love and shelter and children obey.

6. The way that we are “filled” with this righteousness is that Jesus gave us his own righteousness through his death on the cross for our sins. We are depending on his righteousness, not our own. Describe how a religion based on grace instead of merit is a blessing. (Note the passage from Romans below.)

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in ^[h] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

7. If Jesus has given us his righteousness—so that we can have the sense of being totally satiated in our hunger for righteousness—how can this gift impact our actual, ongoing behavior in this life?
8. Prayer: Among our usual prayer requests, let us pray that we hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness in such a way that we seek to be STUFFED with the Holy Spirit.