

Mount Pisgah AME Church

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Bible Study, Wednesday, December 4, 2019

Developing Christian Character

Kingdom “Attitudes”: *A Study in The Beatitudes*

Matthew 5:1-12

Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

Review

- The *Fruit of The Spirit* (Galatians 5:22-23) indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s character and hence are evidence that a person is a believer in Christ.
- In his “Sermon on The Mount” Jesus introduces the characteristics and culture of “The Kingdom” that God is ushering in through Jesus. The culture of The Kingdom of God is fundamentally different from the culture of the existing world.
- What God esteems has very little to do with what human’s tend to esteem. “Blessedness” (i.e., what God counts as successful) has little to do with material possessions, political influence, or even popularity. “Blessedness” is achieved by walking in harmony with what GOD values.
- God values character. Jesus shares in *The Beatitudes* some of the character traits that God values.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God

- The poor in spirit are those who have humbled themselves, or been humbled by the circumstances of life, enough to realize that they have *nothing to offer God* that they weren’t GIVEN. Everything that they have comes from God, and still belongs to God. Their salvation, acceptance, and value come *completely* from dependence on Christ who loved them.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted

- Everyone mourns and grieves personal losses, and the Lord by grace provides comfort. But special to the Lord are those who also mourn about the existence of sin, both personal and collective. The Bible promises that there is forgiveness and restoration (“comfort”) through Christ for those who *mourn* their own sin (and want to turn from it) and those who *mourn* the sin in the world (and want to see it change).

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth

- Jesus honors those who are meek. They are not weak. They choose to not to react to personal affronts, but rather to respond when the kingdom is at stake. The meek are submitted to God’s mission. Those with God’s mission as their priority (not the rich and powerful) will be the leaders in Christ’s kingdom.

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

Bible Words (from Greek)

Hunger – *peinao* (pi-nah’-o) - to pine after, to be famished, to crave, to seek after, to earnestly desire

Thirst – *dipsao* (dip-sah’-o) – to suffer from thirst, to long for those things that refresh the soul

Righteousness – *dikaiosyne* (dik-ah-yos-oo’-nay) - equity – the state of one (or things) being as he (or they) ought to be. Acceptability to God. Integrity, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling or acting.

Filled – *chortazo* (khor-tad’-zo) – to supply food in *abundance*, to gorge, to feed, to fill, to satisfy

Deep hunger creates pangs and pains like a pinching. The lack of food leads to malnutrition. The body cannot grow or fend off disease when that which it hungers for is not satisfied. The human body can go completely without food for about three weeks before it begins to break down (sometimes longer if there is water).

Thirst is even worse. The body can only go without water for about three days. The body is composed of about 60% water and constant water is needed for its survival. Water is needed for the proper functioning of cells, the

movement of nourishment to where it's needed, and for the elimination of waste. Without water, it is impossible to maintain life.

Jesus uses the image of hunger and thirst to describe the deepest and most constant needs we have. Hunger and thirst constantly cry out for satisfaction – it is a basic human drive.

Spiritually, before we become disciples, the old nature is in control. We are driven by our appetites – our physical and emotional needs. Some of those include:

- Attention/Recognition/Esteem
- Self-fulfillment
- Physical Pleasure
- Power
- Acceptance

As disciples of Christ, the Spirit of God places other appetites within us.

God gives us a *hunger* for God's Word (Matthew 4:4), and a *thirst* for God's Presence (Psalm 42: 1-3).

The more we turn our focus to satisfying these *spiritual* appetites as opposed to those of the old nature, and as we obey God, we experience joy because God demonstrates faithfulness to us. God comes through and we learn that God can be trusted.

Once we see that God is true, our food and drink (what really satisfies us) becomes DOING God's will – seeing that which pleases God done. (read John 4:34). This is righteousness. Thus we begin *hungering and thirsting for righteousness*.

Righteousness

In one's personal life – righteousness is the strong desire to BE pleasing to God, and to DO what God wants, to LIVE UP TO the will of God. We hunger and thirst to be pleasing to God.

We also hunger and thirst for righteousness around us in society: social justice in a world that is unrighteous and unjust. Personal righteousness and the passion for justice go hand in hand.

If righteousness is part of God's will, then God WILL fulfill it.

- God's Word does not come back void (Isaiah 55:10-11)
- The Kingdom of God will be characterized by righteousness (Romans 14:17)

For in the believer's life, God will fulfill righteousness in stages: (Romans 8:28-30)

- At salvation: The basic desire to get "right with God" is met by the gift of salvation. God places Christ's righteousness ON us (Ephesians 6:14-15). This is called JUSTIFICATION
- As a disciple, the desire to DO righteous works will find fulfillment in the power of the Spirit. This is SANCTIFICATION – Becoming more like Christ.
- In the future, when the Lord returns and establishes universal righteousness, we will be changed to resemble the image of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:51, 1 John 3:2). This is called GLORIFICATION/

The believer's hungering is also for JUSTICE (an atmosphere of RIGHTEOUSNESS). The truly spiritual person LONGS for righteousness and justice in society. Personal righteousness is given to BUILD the kingdom of righteousness, not only for the attainment of PERSONAL salvation. (Matthew 23:23)

Thus, although we are promised a world in which righteousness reigns, true disciples will NEVER CEASE WORKING TOWARD IT until Christ makes it a reality.