

Matthew 5:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Analysis

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. This fourth Beatitude presents a profound spiritual truth using the metaphor of physical hunger and thirst. The Greek word *peinao* (πεινάω, "hunger") and *dipsao* (διψάω, "thirst") describe intense, desperate longing—not casual interest but deep craving. Jesus elevates this beyond mere physical appetite to describe spiritual hunger for *dikaiosisynē* (δικαιοσύνη, "righteousness").

This righteousness encompasses both right standing with God (justification) and right living before God (sanctification). Those who hunger for it recognize their spiritual poverty (Matthew 5:3), mourn over sin (5:4), and exhibit meekness (5:5). This hunger isn't self-generated but is the work of the Holy Spirit awakening spiritual desire in dead souls. The promise "they shall be filled" (*chortasthesontai*, χορτασθήσονται) uses a strong future passive—God Himself will satisfy them completely, abundantly, to the full.

This filling occurs progressively in sanctification as believers grow in Christlikeness, and ultimately in glorification when we see Christ face to face. The passive voice indicates that satisfaction is God's work, not our achievement. Christ Himself is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30), and only in Him can this hunger be truly satisfied. This Beatitude challenges nominal Christianity that seeks blessings without holiness, comfort without conformity to Christ. True disciples possess an insatiable appetite for God's righteousness that surpasses all earthly desires.

Historical Context

In first-century Judaism, "righteousness" often referred to ritual purity and legal observance of Torah commands. The Pharisees exemplified this external righteousness through meticulous adherence to traditions and regulations. Jesus radically redefined righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing heart transformation over external conformity. For His Jewish audience, hungering for righteousness would have resonated deeply—the prophets had promised a coming age when God would write His law on hearts (Jeremiah 31:33) and pour out His Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The imagery of hunger and thirst carried special weight in an agricultural society where famine and drought were ever-present threats. Palestine's dependence on seasonal rains meant that thirst was a visceral reality, not just metaphor. Jesus spoke these words on a Galilean hillside to crowds who knew what it meant to truly hunger and thirst physically. By choosing this metaphor, He communicated the urgency and intensity of proper spiritual desire.

This teaching stood in stark contrast to the complacent religious establishment and the prosperity-focused Zealot movement. Jesus called His followers to a righteousness that exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20)—not merely external compliance but internal transformation.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Do you genuinely hunger and thirst for righteousness more than earthly success, comfort, or approval?
2. How does your daily life demonstrate this spiritual hunger through time in Scripture, prayer, and pursuit of holiness?

3. In what areas have you settled for worldly satisfaction instead of being filled by God's righteousness?
4. How does understanding Christ as your righteousness change the nature of this spiritual hunger?
5. What specific practices can cultivate deeper hunger for God's righteousness in your heart and mind?

Interlinear Text

Μακάριοι	τὴν	πεινῶντες	καὶ	διψῶντες	τὴν
Blessed	are they which	do hunger	and	thirst	are they which
G3107	G3588	G3983	G2532	G1372	G3588
δικαιοσύνην	ὅτι	αὐτοὶ	χορτασθήσονται		
after righteousness	for	they	shall be filled		
G1343	G3754	G846	G5526		

Additional Cross-References

John 4:14 (Parallel theme): But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Psalms 107:9 (Parallel theme): For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

John 6:27 (Parallel theme): Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Psalms 145:19 (Parallel theme): He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

John 7:37 (Parallel theme): In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

Revelation 7:16 (Parallel theme): They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

Luke 6:21 (Blessing): Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

Isaiah 44:3 (Blessing): For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Luke 1:53 (Parallel theme): He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

Isaiah 65:13 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:

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