

Hunger and Thirst

by Anton Bosch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of hungering and thirsting for righteousness, which is the key to true satisfaction and fulfillment in life.

Duration: 33:37

Scripture: Psalm 17:15, Psalm 42:1, Psalm 51:10, Matthew 5:6, Matthew 6:33, Galatians 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:22

Topics: "Righteousness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of hunger and thirst for righteousness. He compares these desires to the basic needs of food and water, stating that without them, we lack the essentials of life. The speaker encourages listeners to pursue righteousness with the same intensity and single-mindedness as people pursue fame and fortune. He also highlights the story of the prodigal son, noting that true hunger for righteousness only arises when we are desperate and unsatisfied with the things of the world. The speaker urges listeners to seek a deep and continual longing for the Lord Jesus and his righteousness.

Transcript

This beatitude, sorry we didn't say which one we're dealing with, verse 6, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. This thirsting for righteousness is not only for a righteousness in the church and in the world.

Of course there is a hunger and a thirst even amongst unbelievers for righteousness in the world, for honesty amongst politicians and bureaucrats, for integrity in business, for honesty in people's dealings and in law and all of these things. Obviously all of us hunger for that and even unbelievers cry out for a just and a fair society. This beatitude goes beyond just wanting to see righteousness in the world.

It also goes beyond dealing with righteousness in the church and of course there is a hunger and a desire and a thirst to see righteousness in the church, to see people. The word righteousness really deals with being right, with our judgments and our actions being right, being righteous, being those that God would in fact promote. So wanting to see Christians act righteously towards one another, to see Christians speak righteously, to see Christians act and behave righteously towards the world, to see Christians act righteously in their business dealings, to see Christians act righteously in their relationships with their bosses and with their employees.

All of these things are legitimate things. These are things that we need and we must see. And yet this goes beyond just wanting to see righteousness in those senses.

It deals with righteousness within my own self, righteousness in my relationship with God. And it's not righteousness in the sense of the way in which Paul uses it in Romans. The word righteousness has two applications.

The one is a judicial one or a legal one. And so because of the work of the cross of Calvary, we are righteous. We are righteous before God.

As God looks upon us, he finds us acceptable and he says that we are right with him and therefore we are saved. But it deals with something more than that. There is another sense in which righteousness needs to be a practical thing which is outlived in our lives.

And so as much as we have been made righteous, we need to be righteous. We need to act righteously. Our lives and our deeds need to be righteous.

And so the desire for righteousness needs to go beyond just being right with God in the sense that I'm going to heaven. Many Christians are quite happy with that. And they say, well, I've been made righteous by the work of the cross.

I'm going to heaven. So that's all that's important. And yet I believe that this beatitude is going beyond that.

And he says that we need to hunger and we need to thirst, not just for that judicial or theoretical righteousness, but for a practical outworking of righteousness within our lives. Now, Martin Lloyd-Jones says that if this is the most blessed scripture to you, then you can be sure you're a Christian. Now, that's quite a challenge because I don't know many Christians who would say this is the most blessed scripture.

And yet he says that if this is the most blessed scripture, you can be sure you're a Christian. If it is not, you need to re-examine your foundations. Now, that's a very strong statement.

That's a very strong statement. And so he's basically saying that you are saved if you are hungering and thirsting after righteousness. And that your salvation is questionable if you're not.

If the driving force within your life is not to be righteous and to have the righteousness of the Lord Jesus made real in your life. If that is not real to me, if that is not what I'm desiring with all of my heart, there is a question mark as to whether I'm truly a Christian. That's how strongly he states it.

Now, notice also that the Lord Jesus speaks here about hungering and thirsting for righteousness. And he says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Now, again, the problem is that we all have these verses, but we get them a little bit back to front sometimes.

And so, many people hunger and thirst after blessedness. But he doesn't say we must hunger and thirst after blessedness or happiness. The modern word of that word, Greek word makarios.

He doesn't say hunger and thirst after blessedness. He says hunger and thirst after righteousness. And if we do that, then we will be blessed.

You see, we can get it the wrong way around. All of us want to be blessed. Even unbelievers want to be blessed.

Everybody wants to know blessing in their lives. Everybody is hungering and thirsting after blessedness. And yet, blessedness does not come by hungering and thirsting after blessedness.

Blessedness comes when we hunger and thirst after righteousness. That is when we are blessed. And we've got to get it the right way around.

And so, there are many, many people who are preaching a message of saying, well, this is how you can be blessed. Just give to God. Just want God.

Just be in the meetings. And you'll be blessed. Now, Jesus says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

That's where the blessing is to be found. When we desire this true blessedness. Now, the problem is that we are driven.

And hunger and thirst speaks about a desire and a need and a drive for something. And we are unfortunately driven towards the wrong things or by the wrong things. And there are many examples in the scriptures.

You remember the young prodigal son. How that he desired friends. Desired the good life.

And he's driven by that. And he's prepared to pay any price. He's prepared to trample on the family.

He's prepared to squander all the money that he can. In order that he may achieve that which the world has to offer. And yet, when he comes to the end of that, he says that that was a waste of time.

That was of no value. And he's left hungry. And he returns to his father.

Lucifer, right in the beginning, had a hunger to be in the position of God. It was something that drove him. And that he was prepared and he was able to give up his position as the angel that covers.

And he loses everything in the process. And we see how that men are prepared even today to sacrifice anything. To achieve their ambitions.

To achieve their goals. And yet, when it comes to spiritual things, it seems that we just accept some kind of mediocre Christianity within ourselves. We're not speaking about anybody else, but within ourselves.

We seem to be so easily satisfied by spiritual mediocrity within our own lives. And yet, when it comes to the things of the world, we are often driven to work very hard to do whatever we can in order to achieve those things. In order to grab hold of those things.

And yet, those things are never able to satisfy us. And Jeremiah speaks about the fact, or the Lord speaks through Jeremiah, and he says that Israel has forsaken him, the living water. And they've hewn out for themselves cisterns that do not hold water.

And this is the problem, is that the true satisfaction can only be found at the feet of the Lord Jesus. He is the only one who can truly satisfy. You remember the woman at the well.

And I believe that Jesus had this in mind when he was speaking to her. Because he says, I am that living water. And she was looking for satisfaction.

She was trying to still some need and some desire within her. And this drove her. And so she went through five husbands and was living now with a sixth man whom she wasn't married with.

Hoping that somehow the next husband, the next man, would somehow fulfill the needs that she had. Whatever those needs may have been. And yet, each one is a disaster.

Each one doesn't fulfill the need that she has. Until finally she meets the Lord Jesus. And the Lord Jesus says that you can drink from the cisterns of this world, he's saying to her.

And you will thirst again. But if you come and drink from me, he says, you will never thirst. And so he encourages her to receive from him that which is able to truly satisfy.

And this is the problem, is that we spend our lives trying to drink at the things of the world. Whatever those things may be. Hoping to find satisfaction.

Hoping to find fulfillment. Hoping to find some kind of meaning and some kind of peace and joy in those things. And yet at the end we come miserably short.

And you remember even Solomon. He had everything going for him. He was the wisest man.

He was one of the wealthiest, probably the wealthiest man who ever lived. People came from all over the world. Kings and queens came from all over the world to come and see him.

And all his wisdom and all of his beauty and his glory and the magnificence of his palaces and all of these things. He had almost a thousand women. He had all of these things at his disposal.

And yet he comes to the end of it all. And he says it's all vanity. It's all a waste of time.

It's of no value whatsoever. And so he spends his life chasing after whatever this world has to offer. And he receives more than you and I will ever receive.

And yet he says it's a waste of time. It's empty. There is no value.

There is no substance to it whatsoever. And so we can chase after blessedness. We can chase after whatever way, whatever form we think that we're going to find satisfaction.

And we'll come up short. We'll find it empty. We'll find it of no value whatsoever.

We'll have to come to the same conclusion as Solomon and say it's empty. It's valueless. It's vanity.

And yet there are examples of others in the scriptures who sought for true righteousness. You remember Jacob. Jacob also initially set out to find his satisfaction in the things of this world.

And so he wants his father's blessing. He wants material things. And so he bargains with his father-in-law.

And they cook each other. And they scunive and duck and dive. And eventually he acquires for himself a massive flock.

And he's able to turn around. And he in the end has more than his father-in-law that he was working for. He gets the wife that he wants.

And that seemed to drive him quite a lot for 14 years. He works for this wife saying, well that's what I want. And then he gets her.

And then he moves back to his own land. And you remember that he meets with God at the brook at Jabbok. And there he says, Lord, I need your blessing.

He had had material blessings. He had had everything else. He had children.

He had wives. He had everything that would make a man successful. Everything that you think would make him satisfied.

And yet it's very interesting when you read that account. How that he sends his possessions over the river. And how that he sends his wife and his children, his wives and his children over.

And eventually it's just him and God. And he wrestles there with God. And he says, I will not let you go unless you bless me.

Now you can see that for Jacob, even all of the material blessing, everything else that he had acquired. The inheritance that he had received from his father. The birthright that he had bought from his brother.

That all of these things were of no value to him. Because he says, Lord, I need your blessing. I need your blessing.

And so the Lord deals with him that night. And the Lord touches him. And he goes away and he's a changed man.

In David we also see a man who desires to have the righteousness of God. To have the Lord. And maybe if we just turn to a couple of the Psalms.

In Psalm 17. And we can see how that David was offered the opportunity to become the king of Israel. In fact was anointed as king of Israel.

And yet he doesn't grab hold of that. It seems to be of less importance to him than his relationship with God. And in Psalm 17 and verse 15.

He says, as for me, I will see your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness. And here David, even in the Old Testament, understands what Jesus meant when he says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Because he says, I will see your face in righteousness. And he says, I will be satisfied when I awake in your likeness. And so righteousness is to be like Jesus.

He is the only one who is righteous. He is the one who is truly righteous. And David understood that righteousness is to be found when we become like Jesus.

When we are like him. When we awake in his likeness. Now whether David understood that he was speaking about Jesus or God in general.

That obviously we can't say for sure. But he understood that as long as he was David, he would not achieve satisfaction. He would not be satisfied.

But he says, I will be satisfied when I become like you. When I awake in your likeness. In Psalm 63, verse 1, he says, O God, you are my God.

Early I will seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh longs for you.

In a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for you in the sanctuary to see your power and your glory. And so David says, I will seek for you early.

I will seek for you early. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh longs for you.

In a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. And so Jesus uses these words that David also uses here about thirsting and his flesh longing for him. Hungering and thirsting.

You know, those are two very intense words. And as Ken has spoken this morning about our privileged position. I don't think we always understand what hunger and what thirst is.

In fact, very few of us even have an idea as to what it is. To not have food to eat. To most of us, hunger is if lunch is half an hour late.

Then that's being hungry. But when Jesus speaks about hunger and to the many in Africa and other parts of the world. Hunger means to not have food to eat at all.

For days and for weeks. To be constantly starving and to be wasting away. Hunger is something which in that situation becomes all consuming.

When somebody is hungry, they are not worried about motor cars and about wealth and about anything else. All they want is food. All they want is food.

And you read the stories about people who are stranded in different situations. And in captivity and how they are hungry. And all they dream about is food.

That's all they can talk about is food. That's all they want is just to have some food. And thirst also is very, very intense.

And again, sometimes we feel that we are thirsty because we haven't had a drink half an hour or an hour ago. And yet when you are fighting in a war or you are fighting a fire particularly. Those sorts of circumstances where there is just no water.

Eventually your whole being will sell anything just to be able to get some water to drink. It becomes an intense, it's a very intense feeling. Which when we sit in our ease and our comfort we can't really appreciate.

And yet hunger and thirst are those two most basic needs and desires of man. To eat and to drink. Those are the most basic things we need.

Everything else is extra. Clothing and warmth and all of these things. If we don't have food to eat and if we don't have water to drink.

We really haven't got the basics of life. And so those are the most basic things. And those are the most powerful driving forces within man.

And Jesus says that that's what we need to do for righteousness. Righteousness he doesn't say is like something nice to have. It's something extra.

And you remember we speak often about an add-on or a bolt-on Christianity. Like you buy a bucket and then you add on a couple of spotlights and a tow bar and running boards. You add all of these things.

And to many Christians much of Christianity is just a bolt-on thing. You basically have Christianity and righteousness is nice to have. So if you can put a bit of righteousness on that's good.

And if you can have a bit of holiness well that's also nice. And maybe we'll have a little bit of that. Righteousness to the true Christian is not just something he adds to his Christianity.

It is the essence of Christianity. It is the very life of it. That I may become like Jesus.

That I might be like him in every way and in every respect. And so blessed are those who hunger and who thirst after righteousness. And you know the amazing thing about hunger and thirst is that it never goes away.

You can eat now and in a few hours time you're hungry again. You can drink now and in a short while you'll be thirsty again. Now the wonderful thing of Jesus is that he satisfies.

Yes he truly satisfies. You can sit down to the most wonderful meal and you can have all of the fineries of food and drink. And you can say well I'm full now really.

But tomorrow you need it again. You need another meal again. And you know the same with the Lord Jesus.

We can never have enough of him. We can never have enough of his righteousness. Yes it's satisfied.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Because they will be filled. And so we are filled by him and yet we constantly need more of him.

We need more of him. And so we can never come to a point where we say well I've achieved that. You know in the world you can achieve a point of saturation in anything.

Whatever it is. If you're studying you achieve a level and you say well I've got that standard or that diploma or that degree and that's enough. Or in terms of riches if I can make a million rand well then I've made a million rand and I've achieved that.

But when it comes to the Lord Jesus we can never say that we've attained. We can never say we've actually got there. And you remember Paul in the book of Philippians that he speaks about the fact that he's counted everything rubbish.

That he might gain the true righteousness which is to be found in the Lord Jesus. And there he's writing almost at the end of his life and he says that I may know him. And the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings that are by any means might be made conformable unto him.

Even unto his death. And so even Paul having received tremendous revelation. Having walked with God.

Having been used in a powerful way. In miracles and all sorts of preaching and establishing many churches and writing the New Testament. In all of these things Paul still says that I want more of Jesus.

That I may know him. Not just about him. But that I may know him.

And that I may know him in his reality, in his fullness, in his glory of his resurrection. But also in the fellowship of his sufferings. The whole breadth of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

You know many of us know one aspect about the Lord Jesus. We know about his saving grace. Or we want to know about his resurrection.

We want to be part of the glory of the resurrection. But Paul says this is the whole spectrum of Jesus. From the fellowship of his sufferings.

His sufferings on the one extreme. And his glory of his resurrection on the other extreme. His weakness as he suffers.

The power as he is resurrected. The ignominy and the shame in his sufferings. The glory and the majesty of his resurrection.

He says I want to know the whole spectrum of the Lord Jesus. Every aspect of the Lord Jesus. I want that to be real in my life.

Not just to know one part of him. Or some aspect of him. But to know him.

And to know him in total. And to know him completely. And to know him fully.

That is Paul's desire. That is his drive. And you can see in Paul a hunger and a thirst for that.

And so we need to find within our own hearts. A thirsting. An intense continual reaching out for the Lord Jesus.

And a reaching out for his righteousness. That his righteousness may become real and complete and total in us. Darby wrote about the prodigal son.

And he said that when the prodigal son was hungry. And when you read the parable of the prodigal son. When he was hungry he turned to the husks of the pigs.

And he found some satisfaction in that. But it was only when he was starving that he turns to the father. And so often times there is a little bit of hunger.

We are a little bit dissatisfied. And so we will turn to things that seem to have some kind of intermediate satisfaction. But we need to come to the point where we are actually starving.

Where we are really hungering with such intensity. That we will recognize that the husks of this world. And remember the husks are the empty shells.

That the empty shells of this world. Even the empty shells of religiosity will not satisfy us. But that we understand that there is only one who can satisfy us.

And that is the father. And that we would turn to the father. Instead of trying to satisfy ourselves there in the things of the world.

To turn to the father and say father I am coming home. I want to enjoy what you have. Even in my father's house he says there are servants.

And they have enough to eat. They have enough to eat. And so when he was starving he turns to the father.

And yet when he was only hungry he turns to the husks of the world. If we go to the book of Galatians. And remember that the Psalmist in Psalm 42.

This is not David but the sons of Hora. Speak the words that we sing in a chorus. As the deer pants for the water brooks.

So my heart longs for you. Oh God. And so there needs to be as the deer running.

And I remember reading about the buffalo in Botswana. As they once a year go up to the swamps to drink of the water. Which comes down from Angola in the Okavango swamps.

How that they in these huge herds. Thousands and thousands migrate up to the north to go and drink water. And how that the government had spanned these huge fences.

Buffalo fences to be able to stop the spread of foot and mouth disease. And I remember reading a young man Owen who was doing research. And he flew over these herds of buffalo.

And how these buffalo end up against the fence. And then this drive to find the water. They start running along the fence.

But now in the opposite direction. But 90 degrees away from the water. And how that they run along this fence.

Day after day after day. Until eventually they die. By the hundreds of thousands.

Huge herds of buffalo just dying along that fence. But they keep driving. They keep driving.

Because they've got to find the water. That is something which they must find. And as the deer pants for the water.

So my soul longs for you O God. Are we prepared to do everything we need to do. To be able to find Him.

And to be satisfied by Him. To be truly watered by Him. To be fed by Him.

And in Galatians chapter 5. Verse 5. He says. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. We through the Spirit eagerly wait for the righteousness.

For the hope of righteousness by faith. Now again there is a tremendous challenge in my heart as to. Are we eagerly waiting for heaven.

Or are we eagerly waiting for the hope of righteousness. What is it that we really want. And you know it's amazing that to many people.

Heaven is this place of streets of gold. And huge mansions. And beautiful place where we are going to live.

And pearly gates. And all of these wonderful things. And foundations of all kinds of stone.

It is in material terms. Is that what we really want. Or is heaven to be like Jesus.

To be finished with the desires of this world. To finally conquer the needs and the desires and the lusts of our flesh. That we may event that we may actually become like the Lord Jesus.

And that we may be able to see Him face to face. And heaven really is not about streets of gold. Heaven is about the Lord Jesus.

About seeing Him. About worshipping Him. About being in His presence literally face to face.

And so that needs to be the thing that drives us. More than just being able to be in this wonderful place called heaven. In 1 Timothy chapter 6. Paul writes to Timothy.

And he compares our needs and our desires for this world. And he says with righteousness. In 1 Timothy chapter 6. And verse 11.

But you are man of God. Flee these things. And pursue righteousness.

Godliness. Faith. Love.

Patience. Gentleness. He speaks of the things of the world.

You will find further back. He speaks about those who are rich and money and those sorts of things. And yet he says flee from those things.

Run away from those things. But pursue righteousness. Pursue righteousness.

Godliness. Faith. Love.

Patience. And gentleness. And when Jesus spoke about hungering and thirsting.

Paul here speaks about pursuing. You know when you pursue something. You hunt it down.

You track it down with everything that you have. When someone is in the hunt and they've wounded an animal. Then they will track that animal.

They will look for the squirrel. And they will go after it. And they will spend all day if necessary to find that animal.

And to pursue it. When you are in warfare and the enemy is being pursued. You will pursue it.

And sleep goes by the way. Water and drink and food goes by the way. Rest goes by the way.

Because you are in pursuance of that enemy that you are hunting. That you are chasing down. When men in the world pursue fame and fortune and wealth and all of these things.

They will make every sacrifice that is necessary. They become single minded in their pursuit of that thing. And yet Paul writes to Timothy and he says.

Pursue righteousness. Make it your goal. Make it your aim.

Make it that which would drive you. And that would become your total desire and ambition. That you may be able to get that.

But at the same time flee the things of the world. He says the same thing in 2 Timothy chapter 2. 2 Timothy 2 and verse 22. Flee also youthful lusts.

But pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And so again he says flee youthful lusts. Now youthful lusts don't only affect young people.

They affect all of us. But pursue righteousness. Now it's interesting he's also speaking about pursuing a few other things.

Faith, love, peace. But notice then he says with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And so the pursuit of righteousness Paul is saying to Timothy is not something you can only do on your own.

But you need to do that with others who are calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. And so as we've been encouraged this morning is that we're here to encourage one another. And so as we pursue righteousness we need to encourage one another.

And that's what we're doing this morning by preaching this message. Is that we're encouraging one another in this pursuit of righteousness. And when we see one another driving off to the things of the world.

We need to encourage one another to rather drive off to the things of God. Rather drive off to becoming like the Lord Jesus. That I might become like Him.

That my judgment may be His judgment. Righteous judgment. That my decisions may be His decisions.

Righteous decisions. That my actions and my deeds may be His deeds. They are righteous.

There is nothing wrong with them. Every aspect of His life is right. And you know there needs to be a desire to say Lord I want to be like the Lord Jesus.

Not just in theory. Not just in some spiritual aspect. But I want to be like Him in my deeds.

In my thoughts. In my actions. In my reactions.

In every way. I want to be righteous. Not in a self-righteous way.

Not in a righteousness. Paul speaks about a righteousness which comes by the law. And you know it's easy.

We can turn around and say well I was right. I did the right thing. Yes judiciously, legally I did the right thing.

I was within my rights. That's not the question. The question is have I acted righteously in God's understanding? Have I acted righteously like Jesus would have acted? And you know there is often a difference between what the law requires and what He requires.

And Paul says I'm not satisfied with a righteousness which comes by the law. But what I want is a righteousness which comes from knowing Jesus. And you know again it can't just come by having a little

what would Jesus do and saying well let me think what would Jesus do.

It comes when I know Him. When I know Him and when He becomes so real to me that my actions become His actions. My thoughts become His thoughts.

My reactions become His reactions. Not in a mechanical legalistic way. But in reality as I behold Him face to face and I'm changed into His image.

And I really become like Him. Not something I've added on. But a very change of heart.

A very change of essence. And so blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Is this my goal? Is this my desire? Is this what drives me that I may become like Jesus? Because He says they are blessed.

They are happy. And He says they will be filled. They will be satisfied.

Not only satisfied now as we find that we are being changed from one level of glory to another as Corinthians says. But we will ultimately be satisfied when we see Him face to face. And we are finally changed into His image in every way and every respect.

Is this real? Can this be real to us? And I leave you again with that challenge of Martin Lloyd Jones. If this is the most blessed scripture to you, you can be sure you are a Christian. If it is not, you need to re-examine your foundations.

Amen.

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