

Satisfaction Guaranteed

Matthew 5:6

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Before Stacy and I moved here, we lived in a small rural town in Northeast Texas called Pittsburg. Pittsburg has a couple of traffic lights. Our house was in the country on a dead-end oil top road. We had a rural water service and a septic system.

At some point, our septic system began to have problems, and it would seep through to the surface of the ground. Well, we had an outside dog at the time, and although I put a large bucket of water out for her, she decided she liked to drink the septic water. She would fill up on septic water, get sick and throw up.

Obviously, she was thirsty, but she didn't want the good water; instead, she bellied up to the septic water to get her thirst quenched. Now, she thought she was getting her thirst quenched by drinking that bad water, but she was not. It was really making her sick, and she did not know it. (By the way, I fixed the septic system.)

Now, that is a true story, and it is gross to even tell it, but here is my point. We need to pay attention very carefully to what is quenching our thirst in our lives. Some of us, if we are not careful, will try to quench our thirst with the septic water of this world. We will find the nearest worldly watering hole and drink. We will think we are getting our thirst quenched, but in reality, it is making us sick.

What Jesus does in Matthew 5:6 is to call us to have our thirst quenched in God. Listen to what He says again:

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

So, the question, as we begin this morning, is: *With what are you quenching your thirst? Is it septic water that the world offers or the Living Water of the righteousness of Christ?* We need to examine our lives to see which well we are drinking from. We need to pay attention to see from what table we are eating.

Let's do a quick review of the overall teaching of the Beatitudes. The high-level overview is that we see the Lord's blessing or approval upon those who are emptied of themselves.

So, this morning we are going to examine how those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are filled, or we may say we are satisfied with a righteousness that comes from God. So, it is not just anything that will satisfy us—it is God's righteousness.

It is like that old Snickers commercial. Did you ever see it? These guys are playing a pickup game of basketball, and the camera shows them getting on to their buddy, who is playing horribly. Then the camera pans over to him, and it is Betty White. Then someone gives him a Snickers; he eats it and turns back into himself. The caption says: *You're not you when you are hungry*. Friends, it is not a Snickers we need. It is the righteousness of Christ.

Before we go any further, we need to understand what righteousness is. Hungering, thirsting, and seeking God's righteousness is a major theme in the Sermon on the Mount. In v. 10, righteousness is the reason disciples are persecuted. In v. 20, Jesus said unless your *righteousness* surpasses that of the Pharisees, you will not see the kingdom of God.

Then in chapter 5, Jesus ramps up what our understanding of righteousness ought to be. In vv. 21–26, to be angry with a brother is the same as murder. Then in vv. 27–30, looking upon a person lustfully is the same as adultery. Then in vv. 31–32, we should not just be okay with divorce just because there is a legal provision for it in

the Old Testament. Next in vv. 33–37, Jesus says that we should not only keep our oaths, but we should be the kind of people who do not need to take oaths in order to be believed. In vv. 38–42, righteousness is not about getting even but about forgiving and going the extra mile for others. Then in vv. 43–48 we should not only love our neighbor, but we should love our enemy and pray for those who persecute us in vv. 10–12. Finally, we get to Matthew 6:33, and Jesus says:

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Finally, the Sermon on the Mount concludes in Matthew 7 by describing people who thought they were righteous but were not. He says in vv. 22–23:

On that day, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?' ²³ Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!'

These are people that looked like they knew what God's righteousness was. They did miracles, exorcised demons, and even claimed to know the Lord when in reality, they did not know Him at all. They were workers of lawlessness and not righteousness. Many of them probably sat in church every Sunday. They were religious, but they were not righteous. They had joined a church, perhaps even said a sinner's prayer, and got baptized. Some of the most religious even went into the ministry, but they were not genuine followers of Jesus because they had no true hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Christ.

When we read all of these texts, we are beginning to get our minds around what righteousness is and how important it is to answer that question: What is God's righteousness?

First, to understand righteousness, we must look to God, who is the only truly righteous One. He is the Standard for righteousness, and so He is the One who can give righteousness.

God's righteousness is very similar to His holiness. It is His perfections in all of His glorious character. In other words, God is perfect in all His ways. He always does what is right and just. He is gracious, merciful, compassionate, abounding in love and faithfulness, and He is just.

Righteousness is the nature and character of God. Here is the deal with God's righteousness. God's righteousness is what theologians call a *communicable attribute* of God.

Here is how this works. God has *communicable attributes* and *incommunicable attributes*. *Incommunicable attributes* are the attributes that God does not share with us. For example, God will not share His *omniscience* with us. Do you know what omniscience means? *Omniscience means you know everything there is to know, past, present, and future, and you know it fully at all times, and you know every right decision to make to fulfill that omniscience.*

Listen, I don't know anyone (other than God) who is omniscient, but I have people in my family who believe they are omniscient. Do you know anyone who believes they know it all?

Omniscience is just one of God's *incommunicable attributes*. God's providence, His sovereignty, His omnipotence, and omnipresence are a few others.

However, His righteousness is a communicable attribute. Through Christ, He shares His righteousness with us. In Christ, we are righteous. It becomes part of our new nature.

This leads us to the second part of understanding righteousness. Righteousness also means living in obedience to God. When God shares His righteousness with us, and we become righteous, we want to live righteous lives or holy lives.

Now my question is: Why? Why would anyone even want to live in obedience to God? Who in the world would even want to do that? I know it seems like we have just answered this question, but we need to drill down in it just a bit.

Here's why. When a person understands he or she is spiritually bankrupt and they are broken over their sin, they know they are hopeless and helpless without God's help. They have been driven to their knees by the realization of their own sin, and so in humility before the Holy God, they cry out and confess their sin and emptiness to Him. They want to change. They realize they can't do it anymore. They just give up to God.

Sometimes we call this *hitting bottom*, and when you get to this point, you are blessed. This is why. When you hit bottom, you begin to look up to God for help.

Now the question is: How? How do we get God's righteousness? We get it through *imputation*. No one is able to earn right standing with God. No amount of good works will ever be able to atone for our sin. In fact, Scripture says our good works (apart from Christ) are as filthy rags before God. No amount of religious works, sacrifices, or offerings can make us right with God. Our efforts to please ourselves and God are like drinking septic water. Eventually, they will make you sick.

Our greatest hunger and thirst is to be in a perfect righteous relationship with God. The only way to have His righteousness is to have it imputed to us. In other words, it had to be put in us. It is a righteousness that is beyond us. It is outside of us. God comes in Christ in order to give us His Christ.

The next question is: How is it imputed to us? It is by faith in Jesus. Romans 4:22-24 gives us the example of Abraham.

²² Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness. ²³ Now it was credited to him was not written for Abraham alone, ²⁴ but also for us. It will be credited to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

The Apostle Paul says that when Abraham believed in God, and it was credited to him. The Greek word *credited* means to *count* or *consider*. The credit God gives us by faith goes to the spiritual heart of a person. This is where we get the idea that it is imputed to us.

We can't earn or manufacture the righteousness we need, so it must be *imputed* to us. By faith in Jesus' work on the cross and by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus' righteousness is put into our hearts.

From imputation, we move to substitution. Now you may be asking: *What's the connection between imputation and substitution?* Here it is: *Righteousness that is imputed and credited to a person's heart by faith is grounded in the person and work of Christ on the cross. It is not based on a general faith. It is not based on the idea or belief that there is a god. Like when people say they believe in God but they mean it in a general kind of way. Friends, our faith has a very specific object, and that is Jesus Christ. Here is what I mean by specific faith in Jesus Christ.*

In our hopeless and horrifying situation, Jesus Christ, God's only Son, in His glorious and sovereign grace—entered our world. Jesus, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the only True God, came to save us when we were on our way to Hell. We could not save ourselves. We needed someone to step in and live the life we should have lived and die the death that we deserve. Jesus did that.

Isaiah 53 describes how Jesus was our Substitute on the cross:

*⁵ But he was pierced because of our rebellion,
crushed because of our iniquities;
punishment for our peace was on him,
and we are healed by his wounds.
⁶ We all went astray like sheep;
we all have turned to our own way;
and the Lord has punished him
for the iniquity of us all.*

Jesus was our Substitute on the cross. He died in our place and for our sin. Jesus also lived the life we should have lived. He loved God with all of His heart, soul, mind, and strength perfectly. So, when He died, He died as our payment for sin but also as the One who purchased the righteousness that we need. Now by faith in Christ and His work on the cross, we are counted as righteous.

So here is the deal. As we work through the Sermon on the Mount, we are going to see Jesus confront the *counterfeit righteousness* of the Pharisees and layout for us what the *true righteousness* of God is.

The difference between the *counterfeit righteousness* of the Pharisees and the *true righteousness* Jesus teaches is this. The Pharisees practiced *external righteousness* only. It was fake and mere outward works with no love of God in their hearts. They thought they were earning their salvation by keeping the Law, but in their hearts, they did not love God. They did not set their hearts on God in a love relationship. Their relationship with God was purely mercenary. In other words, they saw it this way: *"God, I will be good and obedient and keep the law, and now you owe me salvation."*

Jesus, on the other hand, called for a righteousness that was from the heart or an *internal righteousness*. The Pharisees were all about the *appearance of righteousness* or *external righteousness*. It is not *genuine righteousness* from the heart.

So, when Jesus says:

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

Here is what He means. He is talking about those people who look into their hearts and realize something is wrong with them. They are sinners and broken by sin. But, they grieve over their brokenness. Then they do something about it—they *hunger and thirst for true righteousness*. They want it. They crave it. They desire it with all of their heart. They want to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, but they know they need Him to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, so they turn to God and do what Scripture says.

Psalms 42:1-2 says:

*As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so I long for you, God.
2 I thirst for God, the living God.*

Isaiah 55:1 says:

*"Come, everyone who is thirsty,
come to the water;
and you without silver,
come, buy, and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without silver and without cost!"*

Jesus said in John 6:35:

*I am the bread of life no one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one
who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.*

Finally, Revelation 22:17 says:

*Both the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" Let anyone who hears, say, "Come!"
Let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who desires take the water of life
freely.*

When we taste and see that the Lord is good—we are filled with His righteousness!

Jesus calls the heart that is filled with His righteousness the heart that has been *born again*. When we are born again, our spiritual hearts begin to change. We begin to love God from the heart. We have a true relationship with Him by the Holy Spirit. We begin to desire to live holy and righteous lives. Indeed, we will strive to live holy lives. Then when we fail to live holy lives, we have been given the gift of repentance, so we turn from our sin and back to Jesus for forgiveness and renewal to have our hunger and thirst for righteousness that results in spiritual growth satisfied in Jesus.

My last question is this: *What is it like to have our hunger and thirst filled in Christ?* It's like this: After this service is over, many of you are going to rush out into the Foyer where the treats are, and you are going to grab one of those delicious, heavenly delights that someone has made and filled with lots of sugar and a cup of coffee. You will take a bite and get a drink of the excellent coffee and say to someone, *"I don't know who made this, but these are so excellent!"* It will be like that, but instead, you will have your hunger and thirst quenched in Christ.

In John 4, Jesus has a conversation with the woman at the well. She had been drinking and eating at the world's table, and she was left unsatisfied and always thirsty. Jesus meets her at the well and engages her about her unsatisfied thirst in her life, and He tells her in vv. 13-14:

Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. ¹⁴ But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up in him for eternal life."

In the same way, John 6, Jesus engaged His disciples about bread that will not satisfy. After His disciples had witnessed the miracle of the multiplication of the bread and fish, He said to them in v. 35:

"I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again."

It is like this; we have been emptied out of ourselves. We see that we are people in need. We are empty. We mourn sin and sin's effect and effect on our lives. It humbles us, and all of this leaves us so, so, very hungry, so very thirsty, so very needy.

What our little congregation is going through leaves us so very empty and needy. What do we need? We need Jesus. We need the Bread of Life. We need the Living Water of Jesus' Spirit. We need to be filled with Jesus, and He comes to us and offers us Himself.

He is our Righteousness, and in His righteousness, He gives us Himself when we are most empty. He meets us at our point of need, and He puts us in the right relationship with God.

Now, listen to me when we are put in the right relationship with God through Christ—let the filling, the healing, the hope, and the nourishment begin to fill every dry crevasse of our hearts and lives. Jesus' righteousness not only fills us and prepares us for eternity, but it feeds us and quenches our thirst now. Jesus gives us Himself in His righteousness. You see, being filled with Jesus' righteousness is not just a theological truth—it is life. It is how we eat, drink, and live as we travel to our heavenly home.

Perhaps you are better than me, but I need to be reminded that God wants to quench my hunger and thirst when I am needy. There are many ways the Lord refills us and quenches our hunger and thirst. We spend time in the word of God, where the Spirit of God fills us. We spend time in worship where the Spirit of God fills us.

One of the things I do is listen to music. When I can't find the words to say, good worship music helps me and reminds me. I have lots of playlists in my iTunes app. I don't know why I do because pretty much all I listen to is Shane and Shane *Psalms Vol. 2* and *Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*. These songs based on the Psalms give me God's word to sing alone in my pickup when I can't find words. One of their songs that gives me words and the Lord uses to refill my empty heart is *Your Nearness*. Here are a couple of verses:

*Stronger than the enemy
 Greater than my unbelief
 Closer than the air I breathe O Jesus
 Your nearness
 Oh, Your nearness is my good
 Be near O God, be near O God
 'Cause You're all I want
 You're all I want
 Open my heart to feel Your presence
 And know that you are here*

This is not a *happy-clappy* worship song. It is a worship song of the empty soul that needs filling. It is a worship song that leads us to the only One who can fill us when we are empty—Jesus. He was emptied out on the cross because of our sin. It was because of our sin and His great love for God and His people that He poured out His life. He longed to see His people saved and filled with His presence.

So, when we are far off, when we were parched and dying of thirst, He comes near to us to fill us. When we are completely empty, we can pray—*be near O God, open my heart to feel Your presence, and know that you are near.*

Friends, what are you feeding on today? Is it Jesus and His righteousness of the septic of the world?

*How blessed is the person who knows enough not to be satisfied with any
 partial goodness that he/she hopes will please God, who is not satisfied with
 human goodness and religious effort that always falls short. O how happy is the
 person who seeks the divine righteousness that only comes through faith in
 Jesus Christ alone apart from works because God will certainly provide it—their
 satisfaction is guaranteed.*

Friends, may you:

*Taste and see that the Lord is good.
 How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!*