

Beautiful Attitude 2 (Matt 5:1-12)



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

- a) Hunger and thirst are fundamental and intense human need and desire. Seeing people who suffer hunger triggers strong compassion. Thirst is an even more intense need than hunger. What is the greatest hunger and thirst in your heart? Many books are written on how to be successful and prosperous. It never goes out of fashion.

But how many books are written on the subject of righteousness? How to live a righteous and holy life? How many hunger and thirst for righteousness even among Christians? Is it the top of our priority list? How much of our prayer and tears? What price would you pay to be right with God if you need to choose between righteousness and prosperity?

Throughout the ages god-fearing Christians arose to confront the darkness of their generation at a great personal cost. Against slavery because righteousness is more important than profit. Bribery is a great problem in the political arena today. The world says, 'Happiness now and holiness hereafter.' Jesus says, 'Holiness now and happiness hereafter.' Happiness is a by-product of holiness.

- b) A great unresolved dilemma in the Old Testament was - How can I get right with God? *C.f. Job 9:2, 'But how can a man be righteous before God?'* Left to our own ways, we will never get there. Thank God, in Jesus Christ this dilemma is fully resolved. Making us righteous is God's number one priority. That is why God has given to us His righteousness as the very first priority through the gospel. Our salvation stands on this. And also God's love for us (Rom 1:17).

Our problems is - we receive righteousness as a FREE gift from God (there is no other way to achieve it), so we do not put the highest value on it as we should. God's righteousness is the most precious gift He gives us when we are born-again. And at the end of our life, the culmination of our faith lived out in His righteousness, becomes our gift to God. *'For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.'* (Rev 19:8) *'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.'* (Matt 6:33)

A wise person once prayed, 'Lord, please judge me.' I.e. 'Help me to judge myself correctly.' This is a spiritual person's mindset (1 Cor 11:31-12). *C.f. Heb 11:5. 'By faith Enoch obtained this testimony that he pleased God.'*

At the end of your life, if all you get is a testimony that you pleased God, would it be enough for you?

5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

- a) The definition of mercy is 'going beyond what is deserved.' When we give people what they deserve, it is called justice. Mercy is not a difficult concept to understand intellectually. But it is so hard to remember it when you are confronted with your cry and demand for justice.

The story of the good Samaritan is an illustration of mercy (Luke 10:25-37). Why would a Jew go through Jericho to get to Galilee? To avoid passing through the Samaritan towns. There was a deep racial contempt the Jews had for the Samaritans who were 'half-casts'. But it was not a Jew but a Samaritan who stopped for the dying Jew - an offensive story to the Jews. In South Africa, a black African risked his life and saved a white man trapped in the collapsing mine. But upon awaking in the hospital the white man refused to shake hands with his rescuer nor thank him because of his skin colour. If that white man got trapped in the same condition again, should the African man save him all over again?

- b) Being merciful is not human nature. It is very difficult to give mercy to the undeserving when we can demand justice. Mercy is nothing short of the demonstration of God's supernatural work in us. The only reason we can show mercy to someone who does not deserve it, is because we do know how much mercy we have received from God.

To repay good with good is being human. To repay evil with evil is being beastlike. To repay good with evil is being devil-like. To repay evil with good is being God-like.

Jesus said, 'Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.' (Matt 5:48). Jesus said this in the context of showing mercy to those who do not deserve it, i.e. loving our enemies. A parallel passage in Luke 6:36, 'Therefore, be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful.'

When we are merciful, we are most like God.

6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

- a) *'Without holiness, no one will see the Lord.'* (Heb 12:14). Christianity is the religion of purity in the heart. It takes holiness of heart to 'see' God. The inability to see God clearly is a problem that lies with us.

C.f. Ps 18:25-26, 'With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful, with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless, with the pure You will show Yourself pure, and with the devious (twisted) You will show Yourself shrewd.'

The world is filled with rage toward the 'shrewd' God. But no one can outsmart God. He is always on top of all our game, for He sees through our hearts.

- b) The promise is to the pure that they will see God! *Ps 24:3-4, 'Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart...' C.f. 2 Cor 11:3 – 'simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.'*

7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

- a) Jimmy Carter once quoted this verse after the Camp David Summit in 1978 yet failed to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East. True peace-making can only come about in God's way. *'There is no peace,' says the LORD, 'for the wicked.'* (Is 48:22)

Beware of contentious people. *Prov 26:20-21, 'As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.'* C.f. *Provs 15:1-2, 'A soft answer turns away wrath. But a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise use knowledge rightly. But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.'*

True men and women of peace are like precious jewels. Jesus instructed His disciples to find a man of peace in the city and work from that base (Luke 10:6-7).

- b) The real peacemakers are those with the ministry of reconciliation, following the supreme Peacemaker the Lord Jesus Christ. *2 Cor 5:18-20, 'Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.'*

Reflection

1. How did Jesus challenge your understanding of what it means to be blessed?
2. Give yourself a mark 1 - 5 on each of these spiritual qualities?

Poor in spirit	Mourn	Meek	Righteousness
Merciful	Pure	Peacemaker	Persecuted

3. In which areas do you excel or lack? What can you do about them?