

Blessed Righteousness

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[0 : 0 0] but if we could for a short while and with the Lord's enabling if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read the gospel according to Matthew Matthew chapter 5 Matthew 5 and if we read we'll just read it again from the beginning seeing the crowds Jesus went up on the mountain and when he sat down his disciples came to him and he opened his mouth and taught them saying blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth and our text for this evening blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied do you remember in our study of the pilgrim's progress where Christian Christian was the main character you remember in the pilgrim's progress Christian he fled from the city of destruction and he was delivered from the slough of despond then he passed through the wicked gate he explored the interpreter's house and then he came to the cross and it was as Christian ascended the hill of salvation as Bunyan described it he's called it the hill of salvation and he came to the cross and as he came to the cross you remember the burden that was upon his back it rolled off his back and rolled all the way down into the empty tomb at the bottom never to be seen again and then you remember that as

Christian stood weeping at the wondrous cross upon which the prince of glory died there were three shining ones that appeared before him and the first shining one said your sins are forgiven the second stripped him of his rags and clothed him in righteousness and then the third shining one we're told set a mark on Christian's forehead and gave him an entry scroll to the celestial city and with that Christian he gave three leaps for joy and he sang blessed cross blessed sepulchre blessed rather be the man who was put to shame for me Christian rejoiced he rejoiced that he had received blessed righteousness Christian rejoiced that he had received blessed righteousness and that's what encouraged and even enabled Christian to keep going throughout the pilgrim's progress he had received blessed righteousness and that's what Jesus is reminding and reassuring you this evening in this fourth beatitude that as a Christian as someone who has entered the kingdom of heaven by faith in Jesus Christ you are entitled to enjoy and entitled to enjoy and experience all the blessings and benefits of the kingdom of heaven and one such blessing and benefit is blessed righteousness blessed righteousness and in this beatitude in verse 6 Jesus he's reminding us and reassuring us of two things well we'll make it personal this evening he's reminding you and reassuring you of two things he's reminding and reassuring you of your spiritual declaration and your spiritual desire your spiritual declaration and your spiritual desire so first of all he's reminding you and reassuring you of your spiritual declaration when he says blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied. As you know, these opening verses in the Sermon on the Mount, they set before us nine beatitudes. They're nine statements of blessing or nine benedictions of blessedness. And Jesus says that if you have entered the kingdom of heaven by faith, then you're blessed. You're blessed. And as we said before, the word blessed, it means to kneel in the sense of kneeling before King Jesus in surrender and submission. Therefore, Jesus says, if you have entered the kingdom of heaven by faith, if you've surrendered and submitted your life under the lordship of Jesus Christ, if you've come kneeling before King Jesus with your head bowed and your hand outstretched, then you're blessed. You're blessed. Because you have received from the gracious, loving, and merciful hand of King Jesus what you do not deserve. And my friend, when King Jesus gives to you what you do not deserve, he blesses you. Because blessing only comes from the gracious, merciful, and loving hand of King Jesus. Therefore, what Jesus says is that if you've entered the kingdom of heaven by faith, then you're entitled to enjoy and experience all the blessings and benefits of this kingdom. You're blessed. You're blessed, as Paul says, with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. And one such blessing is righteousness. You have been blessed or you have received blessed righteousness. You know, my Christian friend, this is the wonder of

wonders that you can say tonight with Horatius Bonar. You can say with him and testify with him, I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast. I came to Jesus, how as I was, weary and worn and sad. But I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad. And he has made you glad because when you came to him, when you came to him on bended knee and with your head bowed and your hand outstretched, he gave to you what you do not deserve. And he blessed you. He blessed you with his blessed righteousness. He blessed you with his blessed righteousness. And you know, that's what Bunyan sought to illustrate when Christian came to the cross. That's what he sought to emphasize to us in the pilgrim's progress, that when Christian came to the cross and he received that robe of righteousness, he was one who experienced and enjoyed Calvary's great transaction. And that's true of all of us here this evening. We have experienced Calvary's great transaction. And we now are those who enjoy blessed righteousness. And you know, my friend, in the nuisance and even the noise of this world, and in all the commotion and in all the chaos of life, you know, it's good for us on a Wednesday evening to just come aside from it all for a while and be reminded and reassured that in Christ. In Christ, you have received a spiritual declaration of righteousness. In Christ, you have been blessed by a gracious, loving, and merciful King who is King

Jesus. In Christ, he has pardoned all your sins. He accepts you as righteous in his sight only because of the righteousness of Christ. In Christ, he has been blessed by the righteousness of Christ imputed to you and received by faith alone. And this is the wonder of wonders that King Jesus, he bore our sin and shame in his own body at the tree of Calvary so that we might die to sin, so that you might die to sin and live unto righteousness. He was wounded for your transgressions. He was bruised for your iniquities.

The chastisement of your peace was upon him. With his stripes, you are healed. And, you know, we should never tire of hearing that because that's our position tonight. He took the covenant curse upon himself that you might receive the covenant blessing of God. For your sake, says Paul, for your sake, he was made to be sin, even though he knew no sin, all so that you might be made the righteousness of God in him. My friend, this is Calvary's great transaction. And we should never tire of thinking of it. We should never tire of coming to the cross. And, you know, it's when we come to the cross, like Christian came to the cross. We should stand there and say, well, the worst about me was laid upon him. And the best about him was laid upon me. My disobedience was reckoned to him. His obedience was reckoned to me. My sin and shame was transferred to Christ. His salvation and security was transferred to me. My ruin credited to me. My ruin credited to him. His riches credited to me. My rags of righteousness were removed and his robe of righteousness was received. We should never tire of it. We should never tire of hearing those precious words that bearing shame and scoffing rude. In my place condemned, he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah. What a Savior. We should never tire of Calvary's great transaction. We should never tire of it because it's a wonderful transaction. We are made righteous. We have received blessed righteousness. It was Calvary's great transaction, but it was also

[10 : 33] Calvary's great transformation. Because although you probably don't feel it, your spiritual declaration of righteousness before a holy God, it means that you are as righteous today, and this is the wonder of it, you are as righteous today as you will be when you stand before Jesus in glory. Because your Bible affirms to you and assures you that when you stand before Jesus in glory, you shall see him, and you will be like him. You will be as righteous as he is because you are clothed in his righteousness.

I know what John said when he was given that revelation of heaven, and I love that. I love that passage in Revelation chapter 7, where John sees this great multitude that no man can number, and there's people there from every tribe, nation, language, and people, and they're all standing before the throne of Jesus.

They're all singing praise and glory to the Lamb. But you know what's noticeable about them is that they've all come to experience and enjoy the fullness. The fullness of Calvary's great transaction, and the fullness of Calvary's great transformation. Because you remember that, John, he was asked by one of the elders, the one of the elders who were around the throne, he was asked that beautiful question, who are these? Who are all these people who are clothed in white, and where have they come from? And John says to him, sir, you know, you know the answer. And the elder replies, yes, these are the ones coming out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. You're my Christian friend, it's through Calvary's great transaction, and Calvary's great transformation that you have received from the gracious, loving, merciful hand of King Jesus, what you do not deserve. And that's a perspective we should always have upon salvation. We do not deserve it. It is all of grace. And yet the wonder is we are blessed, and we have received blessed righteousness. We have received blessed righteousness, so that tonight we can say with Christian, as we come to the cross, we can say with him in the pilgrim's progress, blessed cross, blessed sepulcher, blessed rather be the man who was put to shame for me. My friend, with Christian, you can rejoice tonight by saying that you have received blessed righteousness. You have received this blessed righteousness.

You have received what you do not deserve. But in this beatitude, Jesus reminds and reassures you of two things. First, your spiritual declaration. You have received blessed righteousness. But the second is your spiritual desire. Your spiritual declaration, and then your spiritual desire. Your spiritual desire.

He says in verse 6, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Now, we said before that these nine beatitudes, in these nine beatitudes, Jesus isn't telling us what we're to do as Christians, or even what we're to be as Christians. Rather, Jesus is telling us what we actually are as Christians. And in this beatitude, Jesus is reminding us and reassuring us that we are righteous in God's sight. We are righteous not by our works, or our witness, or even our worship, but we are righteous by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And Jesus says, as those who are righteous, as those who have received righteousness, He says, you're not only to live righteously, you're to hunger and thirst after righteousness. You're not only to live righteously, but you're also to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Because as you know, my friend, there was a day in your life, and there was certainly a day in my life, when you experienced and enjoyed Calvary's great transaction, before you experienced and enjoyed Calvary's great transaction and transformation of

[15 : 24] Christ's righteousness. Way back then, for some of you, it might have been a long time ago, for most of us, it's more recent. But back then, you didn't know the blessings and the benefits of salvation. You didn't live, and you didn't look, and you didn't love, and you didn't long for righteousness. Instead, you were in the far country, in the city of destruction, clothed in your rags and clinging to the rubbish and refuse of this world. But the wonder is that when God's Spirit began to work in your heart, and you heard the voice of Jesus speaking to you in the gospel, you came to the end of yourself. You came to that point where you were made to see that without Jesus as your righteousness, you are spiritually broken and barren. You had nothing to offer this holy God, because you knew that your righteousness was as filthy rags in his sight. You had nothing to offer him for your salvation. And in that moment, you knew that you were empty, and you needed to be filled. And my friend, that's the wonder of the gospel, isn't it? That's what the gospel does. The gospel doesn't just add something to what we already have. No, the gospel empties you of all that you are.

The gospel empties you of all that you are in order to fill you and to bless you with all of what Jesus is. And again, with Horatius Bonner, you can testify, I heard the voice of Jesus say, Behold, I freely give. The living water, thirsty one, stoop down and drink and live. I came to Jesus and I drank. Of that life-giving stream, my thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him.

And you know, my friend, is that not your experience tonight? Where in your brokenness and your barrenness and in your emptiness, you came to know fullness at the fountain of living water.

You came to know fullness at the fountain of living water. And when you drank, your thirst was not only quenched and your soul revived, but you were also given that assurance of Jesus, where He says, I am the bread of life. Whosoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whosoever believes on me shall never thirst. And you know, that's why David exhorts and encourages us in Psalm 34. We'll sing it shortly. But those wonderful words in Psalm 34, where David says, Oh, taste and see that God is good, who trusts in Him is blessed. Oh, taste and see that God is good, who trusts in Him is blessed. My friend, there's no doubt that you've been blessed. You've been blessed. You've received blessed righteousness.

Because your spiritual declaration tonight is that you are righteous. You are righteous. But as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, the question which Jesus is now asking you, and what He's asking you and I this evening is, how is your spiritual desire now?

[19 : 07] How is your spiritual desire now? Now that you've left the city of destruction, now that you're on the King's Highway, you've come to the cross, you're on the King's Highway, you've become a Christian, and you've been following the Lord, maybe for many years, maybe not so many years, but now that you've been part of the pilgrim's progress, are you still progressing? How is your spiritual desire now?

And you know, it's a probing question, isn't it? How is your spiritual desire now? Because we can all say that when we were first converted, when we first came to the cross, when we first left the city of destruction. When we first started out in our Christian pilgrimage, we were all hungering and thirsting after righteousness, because we were so eager. We were so enthusiastic.

We were reading the Bible. We were praying earnestly. We were devouring books. We were listening to sermons. We were enjoying fellowship. We were always in church, because that's where we always wanted to be. We wanted to be with the Lord's people. But now as those who are in the kingdom, Jesus is asking us, how is your spiritual desire now? How is your spiritual desire now? Are you still hungering and thirsting after the things of righteousness? Are you still hungering and thirsting after the things of righteousness? Because that's how you will grow.

You'll only grow if you're hungering and thirsting after the things of righteousness. That's how you'll grow in grace. As you know, we have three growing boys in our house. Some of you know what that's like.

But I have no experience of what it's like with girls, as you know. But our boys, they're always looking for food. Our boys are always looking for food. They're like seagulls that are circling around the kitchen, always waiting, always watching, always wanting something to eat, to the point that they get excited if we get a Tesco delivery. Because if they know that Tesco comes, the fridge will be full, and they can devour everything inside it. But of course, that's because growing boys have a growing appetite. Growing boys have a growing appetite. But you know, my Christian friend Jesus is asking us this evening, as a growing Christian, do you have a growing appetite? As a growing Christian, do you have a growing appetite? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? How is your spiritual desire tonight? Because as the Bible reminds us, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Therefore, our primary purpose, our priority as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, and as Jesus will say, he'll say this later on in the Sermon on the Mount, he says, seek first the kingdom of God. And what? His righteousness.

[22 : 31] Seek first the kingdom of God. And his righteousness. Because as a Christian, as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, as someone who has received that blessed righteousness, something they do not deserve, Jesus must not be secondary. Jesus must not be subordinate. He must be first, and he must be foremost in our lives. He must be foremost in our lives. Now, I know that life is busy. It's busy with work, it's busy with family, and we have a million and one other things to do. But Jesus is saying to us as Christians, if you're too busy, if you're too busy for God, then you're too busy. Because the call, the commission, and the command of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. That's first and foremost, his righteousness. All the other things fallen behind. All the other things, says Jesus, they will be added to you. But you must seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And you know, my friend, Jesus is asking us, how is your spiritual desire? Do you have a growing appetite? Are you still seeking the Lord in prayer? Are you still reading his word? Because, you know, as my good friend J.C. Ryle said, and it's so challenging, we fall in private before we fall in public.

I shudder when I read these words. We fall in private long before we fall in public. You know, that's why we should see the importance of private and public worship. We're to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. We're to gather together on the Lord's day. And we're to see the Lord's day as a high day, as a feast day. You know, it was Professor Donald MacLeod. That's what he always used to say to us as students. Always see the Lord's day as a high day, as a preacher.

So prepare. Prepare your sermons for the Lord's day. Prepare it for a high day and call people to the gospel table so that they will feast upon God's word. So we're to see the Lord's day as a high day, but we're also to see midweek as a place where we come together to be encouraged and enabled in our pilgrim's progress. And the thing is, we should be privately and prayerfully even preparing for these meetings. Because you know, my friend, we'll only get out of the preaching what we put in in prayer. We will only get out what we put in in prayer. And as I've said to those watching at home before, live stream is no substitute for public worship. There is something so wonderful meeting together in person. And everyone here will vouch for that. Live stream is not a substitute for public worship. It never was. It never will be. And so those at home, don't allow live stream to make you a lazy

Christian. Please do not allow the live stream to make you a lazy Christian. Live stream is not a substitute for public worship. It is a support to those who genuinely cannot come. And as I said before, I'm not going to dictate who should be here and who should not be here. I just pray that we will see the blessing and benefit of gathering together as God's people for public worship. Because this is where blessing is to be found. This is where blessing is promised. Yes, we will receive blessing through the preached word, listening to it. Yes. But the promise of blessing is where two or three gather together in his name. There am I in the midst of them, he says. Blessing is to be found in the worship of God, under the word of God, with the people of God, seeking the face of God in prayer.

And so, my friend, as Christians, as those who are in the kingdom of heaven, as those who have entered by faith, we are those who are blessed. We have received blessed righteousness.

[27 : 18] But because of that, we are to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. That is to be our priority, our primary purpose as the Lord's people.

And so, in this beatitude, Jesus is reminding and reassuring you of two things, your spiritual declaration and your spiritual desire. And as those who have received that spiritual declaration of blessed righteousness, your spiritual desire, my spiritual desire, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, it should be to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Jesus says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Let us pray together.

Our heavenly Father, we give thanks to thee this evening for that wonderful reminder that when we came to Calvary's Hill, that we are those who were made righteous in thy sight. And we thank thee that we were clothed in the righteousness of thy dear Son, because he is one who took our sin upon himself, and that he bore our sin in his own body upon that tree. We marvel, Lord, of what we are in Christ tonight, that we have received that blessed righteousness. And help us never to lose sight of it.

Help us never to tire of hearing of it. Help us to see that that is our hope for time and for eternity, that we have been justified by faith, and that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But Lord, help us as thy people to keep hungering and thirsting after that righteousness, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing then that all other things will be added unto us. Bless us, Lord, we pray. Bless thy truth to our souls. Build us up, we ask for we ask for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

[29 : 48] Well, we're going to sing again, this time in Psalm 34. Psalm 34 in the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 247, if you're using the blue psalm book. Psalm 34, and verse 7 down to the verse marked 11. The angel of the Lord encamps and round encompasseth all those about that do him fear and them delivereth. O taste and see that God is good, who trusts in him is blessed. Fear God his saints, none that him fear, shall be with want oppressed.

And down to the verse marked 11 of Psalm 34. To God's praise. The angel of the Lord encamps and round encompasseth all those about that do him fear and them delivereth.

The angel of the Lord encamps and round encompasseth all those about that do him fear and them delivereth.

O taste and see that God is good, who trusts in heaven is blessed. Fear God his saints, none that him fear, shall be with want oppressed.

O taste and see that God is good, shall be with want oppressed. The lion's young may hungry be, and they live at their good.

[31 : 50] O taste and see that God is good, but they not truly seek the Lord, shall not like any good. O children, heather do ye come, and unto me give ear, and unto me give ear, and unto me give ear, and unto me give ear.

I shall you teach to understand how ye the Lord should fear.