LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Matthew 5 (Part 4) :6

Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

I hope by now you've connected with the fact that the Beatitudes present for us kind of a staircase of how you can grow in the Lord. It talks to us about coming to the Lord and I'll put my staircase up again on the screen and you'll remember that each one of the Beatitudes speaks of our progressive coming to Christ. You'll remember that the first stair is poverty of spirit. Blessed are the poor in spirit or blessed are the destitute of themselves. What do you got to do to come to Jesus?

You got to recognize that you've got nothing, don't you? When you come to Jesus by faith you have to recognize just exactly the depth of your depravity. You got to understand how far your sin goes and you got to understand how hopeless you are to change it. That's poverty of spirit and that's why Jesus said this is the very first step. When you're going to come to Christ you can't step over step one.

You have to go to step one. You have to experience step one. If somebody doesn't believe themselves to be a sinner we got nothing more to say in terms of knowing Jesus Christ. They've got to start there. I find most people when they come to church usually they're already there.

Even people that don't know the Lord, even people that haven't come to Christ and accepted his forgiveness on the cross, they'll come down here for prayer like after a service or something and you start talking to them and finding out about what's going on in their lives and you say, why are you here? What can I pray about with you? They don't really know. A lot of people will just say, I don't know, I just felt led to come up and get prayer and I just need prayer. Something's missing in my life and I don't even know what it is.

Then they start talking about how they've made so many mistakes in their lives and they're just very aware of their sin. What that means people is they've had a revelation of sin and that's huge. Do you know there are people in this world who have not had a revelation of sin, of their own personal sin? They go around saying things like, I'm okay, I'm just no worse than the next guy. That person, you know, it's like we really don't have much to talk about as it relates to Jesus because he came to save sinners, right?

Jesus even said to the people of his time, he said, I have not come to call the righteous. I've come to call sinners. I've not come to call those who think they've got everything dialed in. I've come to literally call losers, you know? And even though that's kind of a slang term, you know, that's the kind of people that he calls to confound the winners, I suppose.

I don't know. Anyway, so you got to do the first step. So then you come to the second step which is blessed are those who mourn, right? For they will be comforted and we see that the second step on the step up to the Beatitudes is once that you've had that revelation of your own personal sin, there's sorrow. There's sorrow over sin.

This is that whole issue of sorrow that leads to repentance. There has to be sorrow. We shouldn't try to make somebody feel better when they're sorrowing over their sin. I mean, if it's a godly sorrow, they should be sorrowful. They should mourn.

Blessed are they who mourn. There should be, there needs to be a time of mourning. You know, when somebody dies, we expect them to go through a period of mourning. It's normal. It's natural.

It's healthy. Because they're mourning over someone who's been lost. Well, when we mourn over our sin, we're mourning over something that's been lost. Lost opportunities, lost days, lost hours, lost relationships, sometimes lost families. Sometimes people are mourning over things, you know.

I was talking to Sue the other day and just saying, but for the grace of God, have you ever stopped to think about what your life would be if it wasn't for Jesus? You ever do that? You ever just, you know, we were talking about what our lives could have been like, hadn't we not met Jesus. And, and, you know, we were married for five years before we started walking with the Lord. And man, I know what kind of a path I was on.

And I'm convinced, I told Sue this, I'm convinced I probably would have been married multiple times. And, and not divorced for biblical reasons, but for ungodly reasons. I'm certain that I would have been on that path. And, and probably be estranged from some of my children and, and, you know, wow. But some people have actually experienced those things and come to Christ and they do mourn and it's normal and natural that they do.

But then we come to the very next step. We don't stop there. We take another step up and Jesus said, blessed are the meek. We talked about this last week and we talked about that meekness is seeing yourself as you really truly are. You've dealt with the issue of sin, you've mourned over that sin, and now you step

up to that next step and you have a whole different perspective on who you are and even who other people are too.

You see them differently too. You see them as sinners either saved by grace or needing the grace of God. You know, you no longer see yourself too high or too low. Remember we talked about that last week, that a conceited opinion of yourself and a low opinion of yourself, like low self-esteem. They're both, they both have the same root, which is selfishness, self-centeredness.

But when you're meek, you don't think of yourself too low. You don't think of yourself too high and you start waiting on the Lord for his purpose and his will. You stop manipulating time and circumstances and people because there's a new meekness that has settled into your heart. And then we come to this fourth step of the Beatitudes, which is longing for righteousness in which Jesus says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst. You'll notice I just used a slightly different word.

I put longing in there on the slide, but blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Well, okay, what is this all about? I got to tell you, this tweaked me a little bit as I kind of started studying this out. I had to kind of stop and go back to the beginning of my understanding of what it means to be righteous, what it means, what righteousness means. What is righteousness?

You know, if I, people, this is the thing that really tweaked me. I started reading a bunch of commentators about this very verse and they had different opinions, which always messes me over. But it's amazing how many people define righteousness as purity. You know, and they say, and I even saw, I read some where they said, righteousness is living a pure life. And I was like, really?

Because a couple of Beatitudes later, he's going to say, blessed are the pure in heart. So why would he repeat himself? So that made me delve into it farther. And I was looking at the Hebrew definition of righteous and righteousness and the Greek definition of righteous and righteousness and stuff like that. And, um, I came up with some information that I think you might find interesting.

First of all, the definition of righteous, it means, and this is literally out of the new American standard exhaustive concordance of the Bible. And believe me, you read through that baby and it is exhaustive. I mean, it's exhausting. Um, righteous means correct. And therefore by implication means innocent.

And it comes from a root word that simply means right. Okay. Now, when we talk about being right or being righteous, there are two kinds of righteousness that we refer to. Do you guys remember some of you guys, this is going to be old stuff in terms of understanding righteousness, the two kinds of righteousness

that are kind of given for us in the word of God, our righteousness before God and righteousness before man. Okay.

So you've got these two understandings of what it means to be correct, or if you will, innocent, correct, innocent, or right before God and correct, innocent, and right before man. All right. And the reason that is because, and we'll put this up here at the very bottom. Righteous is something we are because of our actions. Okay.

I put that up on the screen because I wanted you to see that that's very important. Righteous is something we are because of our actions. And I know some of you are already skipping ahead to some other scriptures in the Bible, and you're maybe even taking issue with me, which I'm glad because we're going to go on and we're going to talk about these. But I want to emphasize that one more time. Righteous is something we are because of our actions.

Now let's start with righteousness before man. If I'm honest with you, if I'm upright in all my dealings with you. If I'm sincere, when I talk with you, and I tell you the truth, and I deal with you in that sort of a manner, you could rightly say that I'm a righteous man. I could say the same thing about you, or a woman as the case may be. If you're honest, upright in your dealings, and all those other things, we could say we are righteous.

Again, because righteousness is what we are because of our actions. Now, to be righteous before God is a whole other situation altogether, and here's the reason why. Because our actions, we find out in the Bible, aren't good enough. Even though righteousness is defined by your actions, we find out in the Bible that our actions don't cut the mustard, don't we? Let me show you a scripture from Isaiah chapter 64, first part of verse 6 says, all of us have become like one who is unclean.

And it says all our righteous acts, in other words, our best possible actions, how does God see them? Like filthy rags. Okay? That's how God sees your actions. And not just your actions, people, your best actions, the best ones you can muster, they are still as filthy rags to God.

And Paul basically reiterates this when he, now let me, let me, let me, let me just stop before we put up the scripture. The Jews knew that righteousness was what you were by your actions. The Jews also knew that they'd been given the law, which governed their actions. And so they decided, well, okay, then to be righteous before God requires good actions, or keeping the law. To be righteous before man requires good actions, or keeping the law, right?

And they assumed they could do that, right? But Paul, the apostle, of course, that was never the case. Paul comes along and says this in the book of Romans. He says, therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law. You can take that phrase, observing the law, and put in actions, okay?

And you could read it this way. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by actions, even though actions are how you are determined righteous in the Bible, okay? Still, when it comes to God, can't be done, okay? I don't know if I'm making you hopeless or not yet, but we find out in the scripture that righteousness before God comes another way. It goes like this.

Next scripture, it says, but now a righteousness from God, apart from actions, right, has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness, Paul says, from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Notice I underlined that last portion. So how does righteous standing before God come to a believer? Well, by faith, by faith to all who believe, okay?

That's how we are righteous. So what we see here in the Bible is that once again, we have these two kinds of righteousness. I want to show you a little picture because I'm so visual of what it means to have righteousness with God and to tell you what we call it. We call it positional righteousness, okay? So if you're taking notes, that'd probably be a good one to write down.

Positional righteousness means that my position with God is righteous. It's correct. I'll even go further. It's innocent. I am innocent.

You are innocent before God, righteous before God, positionally, okay, because of our faith in Jesus Christ, okay? What that means is that God has literally given you or imputed, we like to say, righteousness, the righteousness of Jesus to you by faith because you believe that what Jesus did on the cross was for you, all right? But that's obviously not the only kind of righteousness. Remember, I said there was also righteousness between man, and the next picture shows that. It's what we call personal or, if you will, some people refer to it as practical righteousness.

I use the word personal righteousness because that's dealings between man to man, woman to woman, woman to man, man to woman, right? If we walk in that level of integrity and honesty and honor and truthfulness and so forth, then there is a personal righteousness between us. So you've got positional righteousness and personal or practical righteousness. Now, here's the point. When Jesus said to us in this beatitude, blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, he didn't differentiate between these two.

He didn't say who hunger and thirst for positional righteousness or for personal righteousness. He just said righteousness because he's just encompassing the whole idea of being correct. Blessed are those who hunger for those things and so forth. And you know, this is something that we see in believers. We see that, and I'll put the stairs up there for you just so you can kind of remind yourself, once they have, again, recognized their sin, once they've sorrowed over that which has been lost, once they have obtained that true self-image, which is meekness from a biblical standpoint, there becomes this drive, this hunger, this longing to live a right life, to be in correct standing with God, and to live a right life with man.

Isn't it interesting that when we talk about loving, and the Bible says that all of the law is bound up in love the Lord your God with everything that's in you, and love your neighbor as yourself. It talks about that relationship this way and that relationship this way, being true, being correct, being right in both directions, right? In both directions, right? So you need to see here also the depth of what Jesus wants us to desire related to this righteousness. If you look with me again at verse 6, it says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst.

Hunger, being hungry, being thirsty, these are two of the most basic human biological needs. But you know what? Here in America in 2012, we don't really understand these quite like the people did who were listening to Jesus speak these words the very first time. If you and I begin to hunger or thirst, we just go to the refrigerator, or go to the faucet, or go to, or if we're driving, we stop at a nearby restaurant, fast food joint, or convenience store to grab something to drink, or whatever. It's just the moment you and I begin to have an urge even related to hunger.

Oh, I'm kind of hungry. Boom, we just take care of it. If we're thirsty, we just take care of it, right? Do you know that that's not the way people have always lived? Do you know that during biblical times, people actually worked a day's wages so they could eat?

Did you know that? Did you know that there's a proverb that actually says this? I'll put it on the screen for you. It's Proverbs chapter 16. Really interesting.

Look what it says. It says, the laborer's appetite works for him. His hunger drives him on. Isn't that interesting? The laborer, the worker, literally is motivated to work because he's hungry.

He wants to satisfy his appetite. That seems like such a strange idea to you and I because even though we do buy groceries with the money that we earn, we don't really think of it as working to eat. You don't usually hear people saying that unless it's just ingest. We don't talk about saving our money so we can eat.

We talk about saving our money for a new car, or saving our money for that vacation this year that we want to take, or we talk about working to pay our mortgage or something like that.

Do you know that people in biblical times, they didn't do those things. They worked to eat. They worked so they could eat. And as it says in Proverbs, his hunger literally drives him to the end of the workday so he can eat. Right?

I don't think there's probably anybody here in this room. I don't know that for certain, but there's probably no one or very few people who understand hunger bordering on starvation, you know, that like these people might experience. It is to those people that Jesus said, blessed are you when you hunger and thirst for righteousness, for being right, for being correct, for being in right relationship with me and with your fellow man. Blessed are you when you hunger for that, not just desire it, kind of, but you hunger and thirst for it. That's why I used the word when I was doing the slide, I used the word longing because I thought that maybe that might help us fit into maybe our American thought processes.

What are some of the things you long for? What are some of the things that you want so badly that you can taste them? You know, that was a phrase that my parents used, you know, when I was a kid, they'd say, oh, he wants it so bad he can even taste it. You know, we understand what that is, wanting something so desperately. And so Jesus is talking to you and I about what that means and applying it to a desire for righteousness.

Now I want you to notice the promise that he lays out here for us. The promise here is that they would be filled, pretty simple. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Do you know that this Greek word literally means saturated? Imagine something that absorbs water that you left out on the lawn last night and it rained on it and it filled, just soaked up the water to the point where it became saturated.

You could pick it up and potentially wring it out and have all this water. That's the Greek word that is being used here. Blessed are they who long to be right with God and right with man, to be correct, to be innocent, for they will be saturated with the very thing that they desire. I read a quote by one Bible commentator where, actually it's not a quote, it's more of a paraphrase of this beatitude. I'll put it up on the screen here for you.

And here's what he wrote. He said, oh, the blessing of the man who longs for total righteousness, and total meaning positional and practical or personal, as a starving man longs for food and a man perishing of

thirst longs for water, for that man will be truly satisfied. Now, we've talked about how we get that positional righteousness with God. We saw it in the scripture. Paul said it comes by faith, right?

It comes by faith. You want to be right with God. Do you know that that's a longing in people's hearts to have a right relationship with God? Well, so what do they do? They start applying practical righteousness.

They start trying to be good people, and they'll say even, well, you know, I want to know God, but I just, I'm not sure I do, but I've been trying to live a good life. You're going about it all wrong. That kind of righteousness, that kind of right relationship doesn't come by your actions. Remember what we read? Paul said no one will be declared righteous in his sight by their actions or by observing the law.

So you can't do that. Stop trying to be a good person to have a right relationship with God. You can't do it. It comes by faith. Faith in what?

Faith in Jesus. What he did for you on the cross. Okay, what did he do for you on the cross? He died for your sins. Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins?

If your answer is yes, I believe Jesus died for my sins by believing that you are now positionally righteous before the father, isn't that crazy? He looks at you. He looks at you. I mean, isn't that weird? He actually looks at you and says.

You, my child, are righteous. I emphasize that because I know that you look at you too and you see a lot of what is going on in you and I've talked to a lot of you and you're not impressed and you assume that God feels the same way, right? That's what many of you do. Many of you have expressed that maybe not in those words, but you've, you've, you've But you've, you've, you've looked at you and you're not that impressed and you assume that God isn't impressed either. Listen, you're standing with Christ.

You're standing with God has nothing to do with your actions, has to do with your faith, right? So you put your faith in Jesus and you are positionally righteous before the father. It's the craziest thing in the world. I have to, I have to say it to myself every so often to remind myself that it's true. Paul, God sees you as righteous in his eyes.

And then just think about that for a while. Why don't you go for a walk? Well, if it's raining, don't go for a walk. Just think about it today. When you get a little moment of time that you can think, just think about that, just meditate on that idea that God sees you as righteous through Jesus Christ, literally through the blood of Jesus Christ.

You are a righteous person, makes you think differently about scriptures that are written in James about how the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. What about personal righteousness? How's that come? Because see, that's how I treat you and how you treat me. Well, that comes through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Once we know Christ, once we have accepted Jesus as our savior, we invite him to come and live in our hearts. And when he does, he takes up residence there and he begins to affect the way we live. And suddenly we don't treat people the way we used to. Because remember, we're already thinking differently about people because we've entered into meekness, we've already come to that step of meekness, so we see ourselves differently, we see them differently. But now we begin to treat them differently.

We begin to respond out of compassion. We begin to express greater love and concern about people. We begin to take hold of scripture references that tell us to treat others like we'd like to be treated, to forgive others the way we've been forgiven, to mete out mercy the way we have received mercy, to extend grace the way we have been given grace, to be honest with people because we want them to be honest with us, and on and on and on. And it begins to affect the way we live. It begins to affect the way we love, begin to see other people.

It begins to affect our positional righteousness. Now, that doesn't mean we can't flesh out, meaning completely revert to the old sinful nature and just wig out and do something really stupid or say something really hurtful because we can and we do. But we go to him, right? We repent and we immediately receive forgiveness for that so that we can move on. Our righteousness has been established this way through the blood of Jesus.

Our righteousness is being established this way through the power of the Holy Spirit. Right. So, you know, it comes down to all him, doesn't it? But that doesn't surprise us that it's all him, that my righteousness this way is all him, that my righteousness this way is all him. You know why I'm not surprised by that?

Because I was I've already been on the first step. Right, I already got on to the first step. Blessed are the destitute of themselves. And I stood on that first step for a period of time. And I said, yeah, this is me and all my unglory.

You know, this is me, a sinner, lost, a depraved, corrupted man. This is me. So now you think when I step on to step two or three, I'm going to lose what I learned on step one. Heavens, no, I'm going to take it with me. I take it with me into the second step of sorrow.

I take it with me into the third step of meekness. And I take it with me on to the fourth step of righteousness, both positionally and practically. Blessed are you when you hunger and thirst for that rightness between God and man, for you will be saturated with it. That is the. promise of God.

Amen? Let's stand together.