

SB
672
1360 b
Lea 812

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 25 February 1925

MATTHEW 5 v 6

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after
righteousness, for they shall be filled"

These seven beatitudes exhibit a blessed, an experimental, a God-glorifying religion and if we have it we shall in some way, some form, have the blessedness of persecution. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake." He that "will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The devil wont let you hold Christ in peace; your lusts wont let you love holiness without interruption; your will wont let you follow after God without trying to block the way, and ungodly men, if they come into contact with you, will let you know that they hate your religion. So that it will come to pass in some form, every living soul that has these seven blessings must suffer persecution; but that, O that is little compared with the blessedness of a saving religion. But there is one word among these seven that may have been, may yet be, a terror to some of you. It was a terror to me, and made me say, when it spoke to me, that where God is I shall never be. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God". And when light divine shines into the heart who can express the fear, the dread, the horror arising from the powerful conviction which that inshining fastens on the conscience of being the exact opposite of pure in heart. O, but God knows how to make the heart pure. It is made most pure when Christ is revealed in it, formed there the hope of glory. He "that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure". If you try to wash yourselves pure then you will become more polluted, but if the Lord shines graciously into the heart in the face of Jesus Christ that begets wonderful purity. That efectually turns out evils, subdues iniquity, and brings a soul into the holy presence of God without terror. Seeing the multitudes, the Lord Jesus "went up into a mountain; and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit....." The Lord has always shown care for the poor. All through the dispensation of the Jews, He

showed His constant care for the poor. The fields of the farmers were not to be entirely gleaned and swept; something must be left for the poor to glean. The vineyard must not be cleared, the vine must not be stripped of every bunch of grapes, for the Lord cared for the poor, typifying that deeper, that more wonderful care which He has for the poor in spirit. He gives them, not the gleaning of a field, nor of the vineyard, but the kingdom of heaven. Grace, love, pardon, righteousness, sanctification, His presence, Christ with them, the kingdom of heaven in their heart here, and the kingdom of glory hereafter.

"Blessed are they that mourn" over themselves, their sins and evils. Blessed are poor sinners whose eyes are wet with tears because they are sinners, because they cannot keep from sinning, because they turn away from God, because they are not what they would be. Blessed are such people, "for they shall be comforted" with love. They shall be pardoned again and again. They shall be brought near through the blood of Christ. They shall have faith to attach themselves to Christ. They shall have love that will give them union with Him. They shall find the comforts of love and the fellowship of the Spirit in their hearts. And of all the comforts, these are the best as all know who have them in any measure.

"Blessed are the meek" - lowly in spirit, of low eyes, thinking little of themselves, much of sin, and groaning under it; meek, teachable, anxious to be taught, saying: "That which I see not teach Thou me" - "for they shall inherit the earth." Israel in the wilderness had an inheritance before them; that was the promised land. And the goodly land which is far off every mourner shall inherit sooner or later. Heaven with its blessedness awaits every mourner.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Here we have several particulars to notice as enabled by the Lord.

First, we have hunger and thirst; the object of hunger and thirst, righteousness. We have the promise "they shall be filled", and the learned say that this word should be "they shall be

saturated", and that is a filling. As when the rain percolates, soaks into the roots there is a saturation, so when goodness divine, when love, when Christ and His righteousness come near, yea in; when that is fulfilled that is written: "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation....." (Isaiah 45 v 8) then indeed there is a being saturated with this promised blessing of righteousness. And then we have the blessedness of this wonderful thing, hunger and thirst. It is a blessing in itself. These points one would speak a little about this evening.

First of all, the hunger and thirst. It is natural to every living person to be hungry and thirsty, and as the body subject to hunger and thirst is nourished by food suitable to it, so a living soul naturally hungers and thirsts and it must have food suitable to its constitution, and that food is here set forth, righteousness. But hunger may be painful, being for a time unappeased. Thirst may be very very painful being not quenched and the people of God often, as they are exercised, understand this pain. The hunger is spiritual, and being spiritual, it rises to God Himself, and you may, in the light of God's countenance, come to some decision concerning your state, by your appetite. If your appetite rises to God, if you can say nothing else, none less than Himself as He reveals Himself in Jehovah Jesus, the Lord our Righteousness; if you can say, "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God"; then, as enabled rightly to view your state, your feelings, your exercises, you may say the Lord hath done great things for you. O, but it is very painful to be hungry for what you cannot get; to be thirsty for what does not come to you. You see the fountain, you see the bread, the righteousness, and you hunger and thirst for them, but you cannot reach them, and they are not brought to you. The minister tells you of them and you receive what he says, without any quarrel, yet you feel at times perhaps that your desires are intensified by what you hear but the blessings do not come. The blessed righteousness which your souls are after is not revealed and brought home to you. Let us look at this righteousness. First of all it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that is to say, according to the Scripture, it is Himself, for "This is the Name wherewith He shall be called, the Lord Our Righteousness." And when the sinner, by

precious faith, sees that Person who is made righteousness to all the election of grace, his soul is set in the right direction. His desires aspire to that Person and he wants to have fulfilled in him that word that I have just quoted: "Drop down ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness." And the promise is in another place spoken of by the same prophet: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." And again by Jeremiah, the Lord promised to satiate the soul of the weary and replenish every sorrowful soul. This righteousness justifies; this righteousness clears a person from all law charges, relieves the conscience of guilt, takes off the burden of dead works, brings the sinner sweetly, solemnly, reverentially into the presence of God, conscious of being justified. This righteousness is called everlasting and once applied tis always on. Given by the Trinity. Given by the Father in the gift of His Son; given by the Son in the gift of Himself, and given by the Spirit in revealing and applying it, enabling faith to put it on. And the soul that does not wear it, but that is quickened into divine life, hungers and thirsts for it. He reaches for it in his prayer; he reaches after it in his soul's desires. He goes by faith to the throne of grace and puts up before the Lord his case. He confesses his filthy rags, he confesses his shame, his disgraceful conduct, his ruined condition. He confesses himself distant from God, not by creation only, No; much more, and worse than that, by his sinfulness. This confession is in all the thirst that the soul has. Righteousness is justice, justness, nothing contrary to the rule, God Himself having given the rule, and this justness is being straight with God. His revealed nature, when revealed to a sinner is a terror to a sinner. The same nature revealed in Christ's righteousness is a comfort to the same sinner. The peace of his conscience, the comfort of his mind, the stay of his soul, his acceptance with God, his right to access to God, his title to heaven. There is nothing wrong with a sinner who is just and a sinner is just when the righteousness of Christ is put upon him and he receives it by precious faith. This doctrine, this blessed righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, every living soul here must thirst after. His thirst rises as high as this righteousness. He wants to be saved and to be saved consistently with the holy character of God; consistently with that rule of rectitude that Scripture reveals and which the eye of faith sees and nothing can

bring that salvation to a sinner but the righteousness which is here promised. O sinner, good experience indeed, this is. There may be much experience of sin and bondage and that may continue a long time, and does continue a long time with some of the Lord's people, and they sigh in their thirsting; they mourn and are weakened in and by their hunger unappeased. They wonder sometimes if ever they will reach that blessed experience, attain to that holy religion that justifies, that straightness with the holy character of God. O beloved friends, it is no little thing that I speak about. It is a poor way of speaking one has, but the thing is very great. For one, wrong in his nature, crooked in his feelings, wicked in his experience, in his practice, inward practice at the least, for one in such a case, condemned by the law and condemned by his own conscience, to be constituted just, a righteous person; constituted so just that when put in the balance he is not found wanting; when measured by the reed he is not found short; when tried in the fire he is found to have gold. Happy he who so thirsts for this as that nothing can satisfy him but this brought home to him. Go on, you who are hungering and thirsting. Plead, as well as you can, that word that God speaks commanding the heavens: "Drop down ye heavens, from above, let the skies pour down righteousness". And when that is fulfilled, then the earth, your heart will open and in your experience salvation will be brought forth and a happy day, a blessed hour, it will be to you when this is your experience. "Hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Also every living, righteous soul, righteous in his new heavenly life, hungers and thirsts to have imparted to him, given freely, the Holy Spirit in His gracious, righteous operations within. Justification is the sinner's standing and title before God. Sanctification - the operation of the Holy Ghost in him, bringing the Lord Jesus - is his sweet experience of being accepted in the Beloved. And this experience of acceptance is very, very great. Sin bars the way; grace has opened a new way. Sin brings anger; grace brings love. Sin deprived the sinner of every good thing and influence; grace gives him the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit brings the Lord Jesus to him and makes Him sanctification as well as justification. And this work of the Spirit is a clean work. It is clean in these things, first in the fear of the Lord. "The fear of the Lord is clean". It is the exact opposite of the presumption and haughtiness

of our nature. Fools, the simple, pass on in the providence of God and are punished. The prudent, the God-fearing one, he looks to his way, for the fear of the Lord makes him depart from sin and the snares of death and hell. What a clean thing the fear of God is. When you are tempted to sin, when sin rises naturally as water from a spring, and when it solicits attention and indulgence, and when you find an inclination to attend to it and indulge it, then the fear of the Lord in the heart says, No. "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God." And you will find that in your heart, O hungry soul, thirsty soul, you will find this clean fear will direct you to the Lord. It is a strong confidence. "The fear of the Lord is a strong confidence." It tells you that tis best to stand well with Him. Tis best to stand well with Him though earth and hell oppose you. It says now if you have God for your friend you will come well through, and in that confidence you prolong your days. This is what a soul hungers and thirsts for. See if you possess that holy fear of God. That will make Him great in your eyes, beautiful in your estimation, lovely to your affections, desirable to you in His mercies, in His holy character. The fear of the Lord will always be looking this way. There is that in God so attractive to a living soul blessed with this holy fear, that that Scripture comes to pass: "Delight Thyself also in the Lord."

And then, also, the soul hungers and thirsts for the love of God, that eternal love that elected a sinner, sanctified him by putting him away from the world and giving him to Christ. That love that gave forth the only begotten Son, that sends the Eternal Spirit, that proclaims the gospel, that gives the Bible, that gives the open ear and the seeing eye, that gives the attentive mind, that works living faith, that directs the sinner into the love of God. That love every soul quickened by the Spirit hungers and thirsts for. And is there any more righteous than that? Why, the love of God, the blessed eternal love of God, is His justice manifested in the gift of His Son. It is His goodness which leads His people to repentance. It is His mercy. O this eternal love, full of compassion, bowels of compassion and O, when a sinner has a taste of that, then in some measure he is satisfied, but also, in a measure, his appetite is quickened. He thirsts for that presence which is righteousness itself. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks so panteth my soul after Thee O God".

You see in the Psalm, you will see throughout the Scripture, God is the Object of the soul's desire, which is his hunger. If he may but know God; if he may but have His presence; if he may but come to know that word: "If a man love me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him". "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him...." (Revelation 3 v 20). O, says a sinner, blessed with faith, with life divine, Lord, do graciously come to me. You will find you will want Him, you will want Himself. Christ promised Himself to the church. "I am with you alway". And He gave Himself to the seven churches, walking in the midst of them. He gives Himself when He comes and says: "Behold Me, behold Me" and faith lays hold of Him. That is what a sinner wants.

He hungers and thirsts after repentance and there is more righteousness in repentance than you sometimes think perhaps. It is a righteous spirit that repents of a wrong spirit. A righteous spirit that repents of sin, of crookedness, a crooked way, and the world, and everything that is inside that is evil, and he longs, he hungers, he thirsts for repentance. He hungers and thirsts for understanding. "Give me understanding and I shall live". I shall live a righteous life if I understand who God is. You could not understand the character of God by precious faith and live an ungodly life persistently, knowingly. The more we understand of God the more our souls feel a longing to be holy and to walk with Him. "Give me understanding and I shall live." Live in His presence, live before Him and walk with Him.

The soul hungers and thirsts after the word of truth and is there anything more straight, more holy, than the Scriptures. Given by inspiration of God, right in all things, as the Psalmist said. He considered that the precepts of God in all things were right, perfectly straight. You will never walk crookedly when you walk by the Word of God. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness". Whosoever is born of God doeth righteously. The seed of God is in him and he doth not sin, and that wicked one toucheth him not. He does not persistently live in sin and his soul's desire is to walk with God in the way and in the things which are revealed in the Scripture and in the Person of Christ. He hungers and thirsts for

the rich provision of the Covenant of Grace. O what a Covenant. The first Covenant was soon exhausted of its blessings. One sin brought death and ruin. The Covenant of Grace never can exhaust itself. It gives out, it gives out, it draws out its provisions and enriches all the election of grace, and is ever full; ordered in all things and sure. And it is a straight Covenant, a just Covenant. Justice is as much glorified in the Covenant of Grace as love is, and the whole is sealed with blood. So that, whilst sin separates from God, the blood of Christ sealed in the Covenant gives union with God. So after these things, and many, many more which you may think about, but I cannot name; many, many more are included in the hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Now I would notice in the next place what the Lord says about these people. He says "Blessed are they" They, until satisfied, can scarcely think it possible that they are blessed people, but Christ says it, and that must be true. The lip of truth only says what is right. Wherein does this blessedness consist? How can a hungry person be said to be a blessed person because he is hungry. A thirsty person be said to be blessed because he is thirsty. You might say you could understand a person being blessed when he got what he wanted, but before he has got that the Lord says he is blessed. Blessed are the hungry people, blessed are the thirsty people, the unsatisfied desire, the unanswered prayer, the longing not gratified, the reaching out not satisfied, the blessing withheld, yet the person hungering, reaching out, stretching forth, and praying, he is blessed in those exercises. Why, first because of the nature of his exercises, that is of his hunger and of his thirst. They are spiritual and surely that is a blessed thing, is it not. Though old nature is under the curse, the new man who is created in righteousness and true holiness is under the blessing, the blessing of Abraham. The blessing of Abraham first of all was in his being called to leave his father's house, and the blessing of a hungry person lies here in the beginning, that God is dealing with him, that He has given him a right spirit, a straight spirit, a just spirit, a regard for the character of God. O, it is more than we may be apt to think sometimes. It is a great thing to have that thirst after God that makes us say, I want to be saved but I want to be saved consistently with the nature of God, with His revealed perfections. It would not be an acceptable

salvation to a spiritual man if that salvation were not consistent with the righteous nature, the revealed nature of God. So if you have got a thirst for this, if you want God just as He will reveal Himself, as He has revealed Himself, just as He has given Himself and will give Himself, and not in any other way, then the thirst is a blessed thirst; the hunger is a blessed hunger. O living people, think of the nature God has given you. It is called the divine nature. Being made "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." It is blessed to be a hungry and thirsty person by reason of the Object of his hunger and thirst, which is Christ. He is in the eye of faith, He is in the thought of a believing person, He is the Object of the most fervent desire of a living, hungry soul. You have got more blessedness than you can think perhaps when you say from your heart: "Give me Christ or else I die". He is a blessed person who can say that. The nature, the spring of that hunger, the source, makes the person blessed with it a blessed person. He is blessed in his prayers. You say your prayers are but chattering. But now listen to what God says. "Praying in the Holy Ghost." Now that is a great word, an inclusive word. It includes the Spirit of grace and of supplications. It includes the promise: "I will bring them with weeping and with supplications will I lead them." It includes all those things. And when that Holy Spirit is poured out upon the sinner and he prays in the Holy Ghost, well he is a blessed person in that state. He may not feel it, but it is so, that He after whom this sinner is running in his desire, pursuing by his faith, has said, Himself has said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness". They are blessed because none else, nothing less than this Person of Jesus, than His blood and righteousness, can satisfy the soul. Gold and silver, O what are they? The earth, what is it? We think much about these things, and we need them in measure, but what are they compared with this Person? Can we say now, looking, if I may so express it, looking the Almighty in the face, looking Jehovah in the face, can we say: "Thou O Christ art all I want" Then there is a blessedness in that. You may condemn your prayers, but God will put the sweet weeping that the Spirit begets and the tears that fall before Him, He will put them all into His remembrance book and His bottle, and one day will say: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt". He is blessed because his hunger and his thirst leads him to desire to walk with God, to have righteousness

that justifies, grace that sanctifies, love that unites, blood that gives sweet union, and to walk with God therein. My friends, blessed are the people who seek the society of God, who say: "Gather not my soul with sinners nor my life with bloody men". Bring me to know Thee and walk with Thee; who would fain have the company that those two sorrowing disciples had as they walked to Emmaus. Jesus went and joined Himself with them, and that is the company a child of God wants. Enoch walked with God. Sinners in Brighton walk with God when in their souls they are brought to this experience, but till they have it they have the blessedness of seeking it.

Then there is the blessed prospect that is before them, not before them as to their consciousness of it, but in the Scriptures it is before them. O yes, there is no uncertainty as to the fruit of their praying and seeking, and waiting. There is no uncertainty hereabout. What does He say: "They that seek shall find and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Now look, in the next and last place, at the blessed promise here. "They shall be filled". The Speaker is Jehovah Jesus Himself. They, these people in His eye, under His teaching, leading them as He does by the Holy Spirit, with weeping and supplications, He says "They shall be filled". He has got enough, my friends, and take the translation which I gave you this evening as from the learned - "They shall be saturated". This is righteousness being poured from heaven. You say, I have no room for it. Well, is there any room for rain in the parched ground? That is the room, not something you make in yourself but in the parched feeling. Is there any room when a person is hungry for food? That is the room that a sinner has. "They shall be filled". Filled with that after which they have hungered and thirsted. Therefore, first they shall be filled with righteousness. "Drop down ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness." The broken-hearted is healed, the burdened conscience is relieved, the troubled mind is eased. The Lord Jesus gives rest in His own righteousness, sweet, gospel, blessed rest. This is being filled when you can say - and you will say it one day if you are now hungering and thirsting - when you can say: "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". Then you will be filled and so filled that you will say before the Lord you have got enough; for the moment

you will feel it. You are just satisfied. I will satiate the soul of the weary and replenish every sorrowful soul. I bring near My righteousness. Now as the Lord Jesus Christ is called our righteousness, when the Spirit brings Him near that is the filling here promised. That is the sweet, holy, wonderful satisfaction that is promised here. "They shall be filled". Filled with Christ, and this is called Christ the hope of glory dwelling in your heart by faith. This is the blessing after which we hunger and thirst is it not? You can say sometimes without a question in your mind, now what I want is that, to be filled with Jesus Christ as my own. And now the promise is fulfilled when He comes, when He comes in Himself as "The Lord Our Righteousness". And they shall be filled also with that blessed experience I mentioned, namely the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the sweet sense of interest in it, so that the word is made good: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". And with all those blessings which I have briefly named to you this evening the Holy Ghost comes down and fills the soul. So what a prospect is before us, what a prospect is before a sinner who is now pinched with hunger, and consumed with thirst, as he thinks and feels. He has got this before him, the fountain of divine goodness, the fountain of eternal life and love and righteousness to be pouring itself out into his soul to satiate and replenish and satisfy him. "They shall be filled". There is a certain filling in this life; never so much as to give the person to say, I want no more and shall want no more while I live, but a certain filling that satisfies the mind for the moment and gives us to feel, now here would I stay; here is all a God can give; I want nothing else, only more of this. But the complete fulfilment of this word is reserved for eternity. "Blessed are they that mourn"; they shall be comforted eternally. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." They shall inherit the land which is very far off. They shall hold, and see another blessed, wonderful vision, the King in His beauty, and entering into that place they shall go no more out. Well then, may we who are seeking this mercy, be encouraged by the Lord's own word: "They shall be filled". Filled with all that justifies and straightens with the revealed nature of God, with all the requirements of His law, with all the requirements of His love, and with all the blessed purposes of His grace in Christ before the world began.

AMEN.