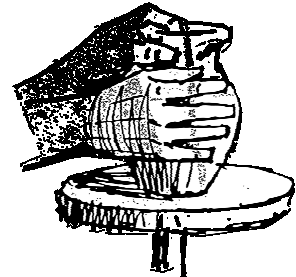


His Workmanship Westside

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ
Jesus for good works."*

—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness, Part 5,

Some of the most evocative words in the Old Testament come from Solomon: "God has made everything beautiful in its time; also He has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end," Eccl 3:11. What does it mean: that God has put eternity in man's mind and yet has withheld from us the vision of what He has done from everlasting to everlasting?

Restlessness and Longing. Augustine said, "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it rest in Thee." Restlessness and longing are universal traits of the human heart. In his poem *The Pulley* George Herbert wrote:

*When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by—
Let us (said He) pour on him all we can;
Let the world's riches which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.
So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour,
pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone, of all His treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.
For if I should (said He)
Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me,
And rest in nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.
Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least*

*If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast.*

God has put eternity in our hearts, and we have an inconsolable longing. We try to satisfy it with scenic vacations, accomplishments, creativity, stunning cinematic productions, sexual exploits, national sports extravaganzas, hallucinogenic drugs, ascetic rigors, managerial excellence, etc., but the longing remains. "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear that your soul may live," Is 55:2–3. The Lord said, "My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer 2:12–13. Many of us are like this. Our souls are hungry, and our hearts are thirsty. We feel an insatiable longing for something. We are restless. Almost everywhere we turn, the grass is greener than where we stand. And the great tragedy for some of us is that even though this is the Spirit of God beckoning us to Himself, we turn away again and again to short-run, temporary, backfiring pleasures of R-rated videos or movies, or drugs or alcohol,

or tanning parlors or a new toy.

So everything turns to ashes in our hands. The thrill of lust leaves the sediment of guilt and loneliness. The drugs and alcohol can't keep us from waking up in the real world again and again with our messed-up relationships. The tan looks so artificial and fades so quickly. The new toy is so boring in just a few weeks. We drink at broken cisterns. We eat bread which does not satisfy. C.S. Lewis said, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

Jesus Had Something to Say About Longing. Jesus said something to about this universal experience of an inconsolable yearning, about the insatiable hunger of the human heart, and about the relentless thirst of our soul: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled," Mt 5:6. Let's look at two things: 1) the nature of the righteousness that Jesus had in view, and 2) the nature of our hunger and thirst for righteousness, and how that hunger turns into the satisfaction which He promises.

1. What Is the Righteousness Jesus Talked About? What is this right-

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Blessed are the Meek, from p. 1 eousness? *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness."* Earlier, we explained the meaning of meekness by going to Ps 37. The reason was that Jesus seemed to be quoting Ps 37 almost verbatim in Mt 5:5. But today's beatitude is not a quotation from the Old Testament. Moreover, the word *meekness* only occurred once in the Sermon on the Mount, but the word *righteousness* occurs five times in this sermon (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33). So the best way to understand Jesus's meaning in this sermon is to look at these other instances of the word righteousness.

Persecuted for the Sake of Righteousness. The next use of the word *righteousness* is found in Mt 5:10: *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* What does righteousness mean here when it says, *"persecuted for righteousness' sake"*?

The Structure of the Beatitudes. To answer this, it helps to see the structure of the Beatitudes again. Recall that there are eight beatitudes with v. 10 as the last one and v. 11 as an expansion of it. The first beatitude (v. 3) and the last beatitude (v. 10) give the same words of assurance: *"For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* It looks like a kind of sandwich: the top piece of bread and the bottom piece of bread both say, *"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* There are two groups of four, and the first four and the second four end with a reference to *righteousness*. The first group ends with v. 6: *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."* The second group of four ends with v. 10: *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."*

Emptiness and Longing for Fullness. The more you ponder it, the more significant this becomes. Notice that the three beatitudes leading up to "hunger for righteousness" in v. 6 are descriptions of emptiness or passivity:

poverty-stricken in spirit (v. 3), mourning over our sin and our misery (v. 4), meekly accepting criticism without retaliation or defensiveness (v. 5).

These are not characteristics of overflowing fullness. They are beautiful and good in their proper place, but they are not yet the richness and fullness and overflowing activity of goodness that we long for. So isn't it natural that following these first three beatitudes the Lord would say, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteous-*

Abraham will command his children "to keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice," Genesis 18:19.

ness—those who long to be filled with righteousness? In other words, after pronouncing a blessing upon those who recognize their emptiness and grieve over it and don't try to justify or defend themselves, Jesus now moves from emptiness to fullness by saying that hunger and thirst for righteousness is also blessed.

Fullness and Persecution. Then look at the next three beatitudes. This is just what we find: after hunger and satisfaction in v. 6 comes, *"Blessed are the merciful"* in v. 7. Now the blessed person is full and overflowing in mercy. He is not merely broken and sorrowful and meek. He is now active and overflowing with deeds of mercy. He is pure in heart, v.8. He is not merely peaceful, but a peacemaker, v. 9. Then this second group of four beatitudes ends with another reference to *righteousness*. Only this time it is not a hunger for the righteousness which we were lacking, but a persecution for the righteousness with which we are overflowing.

A Definition of Righteousness. Do you see the structure? The first four beatitudes describe the broken, grieving, meek person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness; and the next four describe the merciful, pure peacemaker who gets persecuted for his

righteousness. This structure, then, give us the definition of righteousness. If we were hungering for righteousness in v. 6 because we were empty, and then we are persecuted for righteousness in v. 10 because we've been filled, it is proper to define righteousness as that with which we have been filled—namely, mercy, purity, and peacemaking.

Righteousness Exceeding That of the Pharisees. Look at another use of *righteousness* in the sermon to see if it confirm this understanding. Jesus said, *"I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven,"* 5:20. Then what follows in the rest of Mt 5 are six illustrations of how our righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the scrupulous law keepers of the day.

- In verses 21–26 we must not only refrain from murder, but more, we must refrain from anger against a brother and seek peace.
- In verses 27–30 we must not only keep marriage sacred, but more, we must keep our eyes from looking lustfully upon a person .
- In verses 31–32 we should not condone divorce just because there is a legal provision for it in the Old Testament. Our righteousness, like God's, should hate divorce so that we make peace with hardness of heart, keep our covenant commitments, and not marry whoever has broken their vows.
- In verses 33–37 we should not only keep our oaths, but more, we should be honest people who do not need to take oaths in order to be believed.
- In verse 38–42 we should not only stop retaliation, but more, we not resist and return good for evil.
- And in verses 43–48 we should not only love our neighbor, but more, we should love our enemy and pray for those who persecute us.

So it is pretty clear what Jesus meant

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Psalm 133:1

Let your faith be seen in 2014
“I rejoice to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.” —Colossians 2:5

Thirst for Righteousness, from p. 2 in 5:20 when he said that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. It has to do with showing mercy, being radically pure in our hearts, and making peace instead of retaliating. Our understanding of righteousness from the structure of the beatitudes is indeed confirmed. Righteousness is showing mercy to other people; it is being pure in heart before God who alone can see the heart; and it is making peace. The next chapter is book-ended with righteousness, Mt 6:1 and 33. “Take heed that you do not do your [facts of] righteousness before men, to be seen by them,” ASV, NIV. Righteousness is translated “good works/actions,” “alms,” “merciful deeds,” “kindness,” “piety,” “charitable/religious duties/giving,” in other versions. Jesus went on to classify this “righteousness” as giving to those in need, praying, and fasting. Again, we see that this righteousness has to do with mercy, purity in heart, and peaceableness. Then Jesus counseled us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you,” 6:33. In both our relationships vertically, with God, and horizontally, with other people, we show righteousness—that is, a pure heart, mercy, and peace. That is the focus of these verses, so we can define righteousness as mercy, purity, and peacemaking.

2. What Is the Nature of Our Hunger and Thirst? The second thing we want to meditate on briefly is the nature of hunger and thirst and how they turn into satisfaction. We can learn much about

Discipleship Here At Home

ourselves by watching children. G.K. Chesterton wrote: “We all like astonishing tales because they touch the nerve of the ancient instinct of astonishment. This is proved by the fact that when we are very young children we do not need fairy tales: we only need tales. Mere life is interesting enough. A child of seven is excited by being told that Tommy opened a door and saw a dragon. But a child of three is excited by being told that Tommy opened a door. Boys like romantic tales; but babies like realistic tales... This proves that even nursery tales only echo an almost pre-natal leap of interest and amazement. These tales say that apples were golden only to refresh the forgotten moment when we found that they were green. They make rivers run with wine only to make us remember, for one wild moment, that they run with water.” *Orthodoxy*, p. 53f.

Astonished by Reality. I know this is true because I have been telling stories to my sons for 13 years. We have some imaginary boys named Quintle & Quingy. I can remember holding two year old Karsten spellbound with a narrative that would go something like this: “Once upon a time there was a little boy named Quintle. One morning he woke up very early. He got out of bed and put on his red slippers and his blue bathrobe and came downstairs to breakfast. There on the plate was a hot egg that mommy had just cooked. Smoke curled up in the air from it. It was yellow in the middle and white around the edges, and tasted sooo good. After breakfast Quintle got dressed and went outside in the sunshine to play, and had fun all day.” That’s all it took. He was spellbound by reality. But now, I have to produce descriptions of monsters and weapons with complicated plots and sound effects. Barney, the two year old, still thinks sunshine and smoking eggs and red slippers are really amazing.

Longing for Absolute Reality. What does this mean? Does it mean that the longings we feel for greener grass are really longings to go back to that two-year-old simplicity when we were awed by the fact that rivers run with water and giraffes have long necks and eggs are

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help, and comfort here and away

Giles Free—seizure and black eye from fall; confined at home, no driving for 3 mos
Pat Wilkes—recovering from knee surgery
Brittany Tope’s grandmother—dialysis
Ed Fink—prostate cancer; current treatment for brain tumors. Begins chemo Aug. 1
Mina Gonzalez’s daughter-in-law and granddaughters, **Lauren**—broken foot; **Juliet**—broken collarbone; **Bella**—broken arm
Sue Witherington, Brett’s grandmother—breast cancer has returned
Shirley Barrett, Rod Green’s mother—breathing
Rhonda Love, friend of Judy Strand—terminal cancer; young mother studying with Jim & Vicki
Gregg Geis’s friend **Becky** in CA—terminal cancer; searching for the truth
CHRONIC CONDITIONS
Logan Corray; Addison Tope; Christian Harrod; Rocco Jr; Pat Wilkes—asthma
Bill Dennis—heart issues
Autumn Hadders—epilepsy; celiac disease
Danielle Huelsman—vertigo, CV syndrome
Kirk Johnson—worsening MS; needs quick meals to heat up, like soup
Menards—aging; **Lloyd**, diabetes, weak; **Virginia**, macular degeneration; high BP
Sandra Perry—neuropathy from diabetes
Cheryl Reames—diverticulitis; fibromyalgia
Nell Free—pacemaker, heart; back pain
Judy Sartin—spinal stenosis; arthritis
Judy and Mike Strand—hepatitis treatment
Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung weakness

Job concerns **Linda Szymanski**
Moving **Kaysha** and **Brett** will move Sat. To help, go by their apartment at 9 am.
Travel Several at Florida College Colorado Westcliffe Camp this week: all the **Boys**; **Kim Howell; Logan Corray; Owen Bredehoff**; and **Tyler, Danielle, and Hannah Huelsman. Pat Campbell** will be in AR 7/29-8/4 with her father. **Gintchins** are in Bulgaria. **Finks** out this week.

yellow in the middle? No. We don’t really want the first thrill of wonder that rivers run with water. What we want is the eternal reality behind the river. A woman said, “O, to return to the day when we could talk to Paul, Peter, and Barnabas!” We want to be swept up in the realities they were swept up in.

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Longing for True Reality—Righteousness, from p. 3

We don't want a great statue. We want the flesh and blood reality of these men and their cause. The reason the river awakens wonder in us and then leaves us thirsty again is because the river is just a picture. It is just a pointer. *"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High,"* Ps 46:4. It flows with the water of life, bright as crystal from the throne of God and from the Lamb, Rev 22:1-2. The hunger and the thirst of your life that cannot be satisfied by anything in this world is the constant beckoning of God to remember that you were made for another world, you were made for God.

Not Withdrawal from the World. But let's be careful. We could make a dangerous mistake—we could withdraw from the world. We could become monks or nuns or forest rangers. Here is where the words of Jesus become all-important—to keep us from making that mistake. Jesus said that the people who will be satisfied in the end are not people who have gone off into the woods to find solitary communion with God. Rather, they are those whose hunger and thirst has been for righteousness, those who crave the grace to be merciful, those who yearn for radical purity of mind and feelings, those who passionately desire to make peace.

Why Not Simply Hungering for God? If someone should ask why the promise of satisfaction is made to those who hunger for righteousness and not to those who simply hunger for God, there are two reasons.

1. God's Righteousness in View. One is that Jesus surely means God's righteousness—a righteousness like God's, and a righteousness that God gives. He said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."* Surely that is basically the same as saying, *"Hunger and thirst for righteousness."* When we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we don't look to the broken cisterns of our own resources. We look to God. So it is not either-or, either God or righteousness—it is both: we hunger for righteousness *in* God. But there is a deeper reason why Jesus promised satisfaction to those who hunger for God's righteousness instead of promising satisfaction to those who simply hunger for God.

2. How the Sermon Ends. It ends in 7:22–23 with these words of Jesus: *"On that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you evildoers.'"* They called him Lord. They seemed to have the charismatic gift of prophesy. They were engaged in exorcisms of demons and miracles in Jesus's name. But He turned them away at the last day saying He never knew them, because they were not true seekers of righteousness. They thought they knew Him, but not really. They thought He knew them, but they were strangers: *"I never knew you."* Why? Because they had not sought His real righteousness. They had been religious! They had gone to church. They had been involved in religious activities. But the passion, the hunger, the thirst of their lives was not righteousness. And therefore they will not be satisfied, neither in this age nor in the age to come. Deep and lasting satisfaction for our souls comes not from the delights of the world nor from a merely outward relationship with God. Satisfaction from God comes to those whose passion in life is to know Him in the struggle to be like Him in the world, to be His true and righteous sons, 5:45-48, showing mercy and peace to others, and wholly pure for Him. **Make righteousness your passion and be filled.**



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Preacher

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Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Sunday morning

• **adult Bible class, Lessons from Deuteronomy**, Larry Campbell

• **Sermon**, "Our Confidence in God,"
Jim Reingrover

Sunday afternoon

• **Sermon**, "The Fruit of the Spirit is...Love,"
Jeff Wilkes

Wednesday night adult Bible class, Pearls from Proverbs, Jim Reingrover