

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 69

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Section 54 in the book Harmony of the Gospel by A.T. Robertson

The Sermon on the Mount

Welcome to the next edition of the Mind of Christ. If you are just joining us for the first time, we have been well into this, over a year and a half of studies, and many of these have been archived, at least for the past several months have been archived and you can find those on our Facebook page <https://www.centralsarasota.org/>. If you are joining us, we have been doing in in-depth study of the Mind of Christ. This is an in-depth study and you are going to need your Bible and you'll need to listen very closely because I am going to cover a lot of material in a very short period of time.

We are in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount which is a very large section and it will take us probably several months to cover the entire sermon in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 with a few references in other places in the New Testament or in the Gospels. We're glad that you are part of this journey and we're going to jump right into this today and tackle the next couple of beatitudes, as we call them that begin with the word 'blessed'.

The next beatitude is “**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.**” This is found in **Matthew 5:6**. Luke has a parallel passage regarding this in **Luke 6:21**. Luke says, “**Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.**”

Obviously Luke leaves out the statement of ‘thirst’. Matthew’s is the fuller statement because it has both “hunger” and “thirst”. And then, the object of the hunger and thirst is righteousness. Luke does not add the word “now” either as he does in the last passage that we talked about in regard to weeping “now”.

How are we to understand ‘hungering’ and ‘thirsting’ in this passage? Well, hungering ... these words can be taken very literally but they also have spiritual application. The word for hunger is found in **Matthew 4:2** where it is used of Jesus who literally is “**hungry**” in the desert. “**And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.**” It is also found in **Mark 11:12**, Jesus is **hungry** and He sees a fig tree but it has no figs on it, so He curses the tree and it dies. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 4:12** that he was **hungry** and thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated and homeless. In **Philippians 4:12** Paul says that he learned the secret of being filled and going **hungry**, and regarding **Matthew 5:6** the definition according to the Analytical Greek Lexicon means “to hunger after something, to desire earnestly, to long for it.”

The word for thirst is also an interesting word. It is found in **Matthew 25:35**. One category of those who are in need is those who are **thirsty**, and there is a reward for giving them a drink. It is used in a metaphorical way “to thirst after in Spirit, to desire or long for, or to ardently want something or seek something.” In **John 4:14** when Jesus was speaking to the woman at the well, He said, “but whoever drinks of the water I give him will never **thirst**’ but the water that I give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal

life.” In **John 6:35** He says, “I am the bread of life. Who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst.”

It is found again in **John 7:37-38**, “Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture says, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” Then, in **Isaiah 44:3**, water is connected with the pouring out of the Spirit. ‘For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants”. **Isaiah 55:1** is the invitation “to come to the waters, even if you have no money to buy.” **Isaiah 58:11** gives a beautiful picture of the Lord satisfying our desire in a scorched land or in scorched places giving strength to the bones and making us like a ‘watered garden...like a spring of water’. So these are ways it is used in different parts of Scripture.

Of the two words, thirsting seems to have a richer usage but both convey the same idea. The metaphor is perfect. What is more basic to our very survival than water and food – except perhaps, maybe air? Hunger and thirst are natural responses. God designed our bodies to desire water and food for self-preservation. We do not have to ‘think’ about it. Now, initial desires for food may diminish after a couple of days, the feeling may not be as intense, but the *need* moves to a much deeper level as essential organs *cry out* for fuel to be renewed. The body is constantly renewing itself through the conversion of food and water to basic chemicals that can be utilized within the cells. This process is a natural ‘give me more’ process. Of course, too much fuel is not good. It becomes counterproductive and stresses the body’s ability to process it and use the fuel efficiently. Efficiently enough means daily; as we take in food and water, we use the fuel by expending energy through work, of course.

The same is true in our Spiritual lives. As we take in God’s word, we also must put it into practice or else it simply goes to ‘fat’. In our text, the object of our hunger and thirst is righteousness.

The word righteousness, which we will see in other places in the Sermon on the Mount itself, is found in **Matthew 5:20**. It says our righteousness must exceed or surpass that of the Scribes and the Pharisees. In **Matthew 6:1** Jesus says beware of practicing your righteousness before men. In **Matthew 6:33** we are told to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. These three verses help us to contextualize what Jesus is saying in **Matthew 5:6** in the beatitudes.

For righteousness to satisfy, it first must exceed the righteousness of the Jewish leaders. Secondly, it must be quickly put into practice, and thirdly it must be sought as the highest priority of one’s life. “Righteousness” is one of the key ★ concepts of Christianity and to the understanding of the mind of Jesus.

The kind of righteousness that **we** must hunger for is qualitatively different than the kind sought by the Scribes and the Pharisees. Theirs was self-righteousness. It was the kind generated by personal goodness and performance. It produced a “better than those” attitude.

It was arrogant, proud and self-exalting. It caused them to ‘feel’ set apart from others and unable to identify with others. It caused them to “look down” on others as them being beneath them.

The word “exceed” or “surpass” means to be over and above, to be superfluous, to exist in full quantity, to abound, to be abundant, to increase, to augment, to be advanced, more prominent, abundantly gifted, richly furnished or full sufficiency. Of course, the key is the source. It’s not whether **we** are sufficient, but *where* does our sufficiency come from?

The wrong kind of righteousness, which issues from the wrong source, is often paraded among men to be seen and rewarded by men. This righteousness seeks immediate rewards. **Matthew 6:33** makes clear that the righteousness for which **we** hunger and thirst must be **His** righteousness. To get this straight is a *fundamental importance* in our relationship with God! Letters like Romans and Galatians attest to this.

Romans 3:21-26 is key. ★ “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. It is a righteousness from God dependent on Jesus’ work on the cross. A very basic change of view is needed here.

When we seek, or hunger and thirst for **our** righteousness it may ‘seem’ like water and food but it is the ingesting of substances harmful to our spiritual systems! It is like a man drinking salt water to quench his thirst. It had the opposite effect. It leaves him wanting more and more. It produces more harm and more desire until it kills the person.

Perhaps the greatest faith decision that we must make is to believe that **His** righteousness and its related benefits and effects actually fill our thirst and our hunger *so that* we can be satisfied. This righteousness is equity of character or act; it’s specifically Christian, it’s justification regarding a judge, to do alike to all, justice impartiality...this is what the word actually means.

In **Acts 17:31**, God fixed the Day when He will “judge the world in righteousness” through a Man. This judgment will be *impartial* and it will be *without favoritism*. God is no respecter of persons.

In **Hebrews 11:33** the great “people of faith” performed acts of righteousness.

In **Revelation 19:11**, the one on the white horse is called faithful and true in righteousness judges and wages war.

It also refers to our actions and our duties. What is *right* and *proper*? In **Matthew 3:15** the reason for Jesus' baptism was "*to fulfill all righteousness*". It also pertains to our *conduct* or *disposition* in common life. The fruit of light consists in all *goodness* and *righteousness* and *truth*. The **man** of God is to flee such things *as the love of money, and pursue righteousness*.

In **2 Timothy 2:22** here we flee the youthful lusts and pursue righteousness.

It speaks of righteousness in regard to God and law. External precepts in **Philippians 3:6** talks about that being a righteousness. Or it can be internal where the heart is right with God. So it can be an external precept, or it can be an internal matter of the heart that is right with God, having to do with obedience resulting in righteousness according to **Romans 6:16**, and also being a slave to righteousness according to **Romans 6:18** ff. This also indicates "to count" or "to impute" as righteousness. From **Genesis 15:6**, **Romans 4:3,5, 6, 9, 22**, **Galatians 3:6**, and **James 2:23** we see a righteousness by faith in Jesus. *Jesus is the source of righteousness - 1 Corinthians 1:30*. It is the righteousness of God in **Romans 1:17** and **Romans 3:21-26**. He bestows HIS righteousness on men who are regarded, then, as righteous.

As we saw in "poor in spirit" when we talked about that beatitude; we are devoid of personal righteousness. There is *no one* righteous according to **Romans 3** except Jesus and God. He is the only true source of righteousness. Ours, whatever we think we generate, is only filthy rags, **Isaiah 64:6**. This insatiable desire for God's righteousness, His declaration and imputation is the object of our hunger and our thirst.

So what exactly are we to hunger and thirst for in righteousness? Perhaps the major emphasis is justification which we seek often. If we cannot find it, we self-justify just as we self-medicate. Something in us wants to be right as opposed to being wrong, or being off, or being deficient. If we believe in some kind of weird way that we are 'right', then how can we hunger and thirst for it. We only hunger for something we do not have. But why do we want to be right so badly?

Being wrong carries some heavy baggage. There is *shame* in being wrong ... because there is something wrong with *me* if I am wrong ... I am *flawed*, I am *not smart*, I am *weak*, I am *corrupt*, I am *not sufficient*, I am *less than*, I am *not equal to the task*, or *the question* or *the life* or *the challenge*, or *whatever*. It is important to us to *be equal to*, to *be the equivalent* of. We are competitive. "I lose" is not pleasant. Failure stinks. To learn 'I just couldn't do something that I tried to do' is unacceptable!

So, why do we attempt to live the Christian life to its fullest, because we know we will fail? That's one reason we don't *try* to live it to the fullest ... because we know we will fail. So we play a video game. At least, if we fail at that, we won't lose much...plus, "*who will know?*" Admittedly, we can't in an area others might reasonably expect we can, is often too much to bear. In other words, if we fail in an area where people think we should be succeeding, that may be often too much to bear. And if we do fail we have *a reason* or *an excuse*. A reason is "an excuse with a mask on". There is some sense that the playing field was 'not equal'. I was at a 'disadvantage'. 'It was someone else's fault'. These are the ways we reason to try to *justify* why we didn't win, or why we weren't righteous.

So, we long for personal righteousness but it eludes us. Yet the righteousness by faith is not up there, or down here, but it is in our heart where faith resides. So I must learn to hunger and thirst for the *gift* and for the **Giver**. So, what is this feeling, to hunger and thirsting after righteousness and being filled ... what does it mean to be filled?

The idea of filling means 'an enclosure', it's a pasture, it's a ground, it's fodder, it's herbage, it's some kind of grain like corn. By extension, it's to feed or to fill with grass. That's really what the word "fill" means. It means to fatten, to satiate, to gorge, to satisfy with food.

Matthew 6:30 uses this word for "the grass of the field". **Matthew 14:19** says multitudes 'to recline on the *grass*'. This word "*grass*" is the word to "*be filled*" ... it is what you fill yourself with. **Matthew 13:26** talks about *wheat*. It's the same word. **Mark 4:28** talks about *grain*. **Revelation 19:21** speaks of the birds with the prey who were *filled* with their flesh, or **Matthew 14:20**, the crowds ate and were *satisfied*. In other words, it's almost like they are saying they had their 'fill of grain', they had their 'fill of food'. In **Matthew 15:33** the disciples wonder how they will have enough food to *satisfy* so many people. So, hunger has an expectation of more than taste. *Hunger expects to be satisfied*. If hunger is tempted with food and cannot eat it, or merely have a taste, the hunger is frustrated. The hunger may increase and may get or feel desperate. The idea of hunger and thirst is tied to one's need to survive ... to live. Just from my experience, hunger kicks in long before a true threat of death does. In other words, I get hungry long before I am going to die. I may "feel" like I'm going to die but ...

I suppose someone with low blood sugar or a similar condition might become desperate for food sooner than others; thirst become more serious before hunger does, but what does "satisfied" really mean? With food, one can get a drink and have the sensations relieved but what of the deeper longing?

There is a good article in "Eruptingminds.com" about psychology, biological drives in psychology, and it discusses the drive reduction theory. In this particular article it is talking about the drives that we have inside of us...like hunger, and like thirst. It has a theory in there that is called "the drive reduction theory". I have found that there is a lot of research on this topic, and look forward to understanding more about what drives us to do the things that have an expectation of satisfaction. So, what satisfaction does righteousness provide?

Isn't it the ultimate satisfaction captured by the words of the song, "When peace like a river attendeth my way ... it is well with my soul"? Righteousness with God, or rightness with God, makes it possible to be right with 'me' and right with 'others'.

The next beatitude is found in **Matthew 5:7**, "**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.**" Luke does not include this one. The word 'merciful' in Greek is "eleemon" (ελεημων) – meaning actively compassionate, benevolently merciful, involving thought and action. In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament it is used in **Ex. 22:27** concerning taking one's cloak as a pledge, it must be returned before the sun sets or else he would cry out to God who will be gracious or merciful to him. The word that is used in

Hebrew it is solely as a descriptive term for God, so merciful in the Old Testament is a descriptive term for God.

In **Psalm 103:8** the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness, which is chesed that we studied before when Jesus said we should learn what this means.

The word is used often by Jesus 'of Himself'. In **Matthew 9:27** the two blind men cry out to Jesus, "**Have mercy on us, Son of David**" and by His actions, Jesus demonstrated mercy. In **Matthew 15:22** a Canaanite woman asked for mercy and received it. In **Matthew 17:15** the father of the demon-possessed son asked for mercy and received it. In the parable story concerning forgiveness granted to a man who did not extend that forgiveness to his fellow servant, it says should you not have shown mercy on your fellow slave even as I had mercy on you? That's in **Matthew 18:33**. It is used of those who have charge of the poor in **Romans 12:8** or of those who are freed from deserved punishment ... they receive mercy.

The word is frequently used throughout the New Testament as the norm of the Christian life. The merciful allow themselves to be touched by another's circumstance whether the circumstance was self-inflicted or inflicted by another. To display mercy is to be like God. This is perhaps the simplest beatitude to understand, yet there is an implication that runs counter to the other beatitudes. The others strongly indicate that are powerless; completely dependent upon God. We are poor in spirit. We mourn over our losses. We are meek; we have quiet strength, not insisting on having the attention, and we are the 'hungry' ones. But being merciful implies that we have some power over others that we forego. We have power to always hold the other person responsible and expect absolute restitution from them or that they suffer the full consequences of their actions.

But shouldn't people be held to account? Even Jesus had people give an account of their acts, for instance in the parable of the talents. But whatever mercy I show to one who has some obligation or debt to me, still indicates I have some power over them. Of course, Jesus says 'the one who is merciful receives mercy', so there is still a message here of the reality, that the true power is with God who has complete discretion over mercy and accountability. Jesus often extended mercy first, and then He taught or commanded responsibility. "Neither do I condemn you, but go and sin no more", He told the woman in **John 8:11**. "Do not continue to sin or something worse will befall you", Jesus said in **John 5:12**. So there is judgment. If the opportunity for mercy was merely about the blind, sick or orphans, then it would be simple ... those who are in the state they are in by no fault of their own. But to show mercy to those who are perpetually foolish and sinful is another matter. The major question is not *whether* we should show mercy but *how* we should show that mercy. The simple answer is to show it the same way that God shows it to us. Mercy is always accompanied by other qualities such as wisdom, and discipline, and integrity. The challenge is how these qualities are to be balanced. This is our challenge, but one option is never to be taken. That is "not to care". We *never* have the option of not caring about the other person, even if we don't always know how to show mercy.

Those are two of the beatitudes and they are very significant, about hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and about showing mercy. If you *show* mercy, you'll *receive* mercy in the same way if you show forgiveness, you'll receive forgiveness. **God** will use the measure

you use with you. These are wonderful teachings about how we see the mind of Christ, how Jesus thinks, and I encourage you to go back and read the Sermon on the Mount. Read the whole thing through in one sitting and get a full sense of what Jesus says in His context here.

If you want to you can go to our website at <https://www.centralsarasota.org/> where you will find links to all the resources that we have. We invite you to join us again next week at the same time, when we will have another edition of “The Mind of Christ”. God bless you.