



EMPTY TO BE FILLED

Shane Philip

January 24, 2021

**The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada**

OPENING

This week we are continuing our study called **Different Than Last Time**. We are walking through the most counterintuitive statements of all time: **The Beatitudes**. They are not the philosophy for a good life – they are the values of this new Kingdom Jesus is bringing. They come at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ most famous teaching, and each Beatitude begins with the word **“BLESSED”** (happy or fortunate). Here we see the portrait of a Christian disciple pleasing to God and we are challenged by the words and wisdom of Jesus. This week we are studying the Beatitude that is so powerful it has the potential to change the way we live our daily lives with greater kindness – “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 5:1-2 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²and he began to teach them.

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who *hunger and thirst for righteousness*, for they will be filled.

Psalms 33:5 The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.

James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

1 John 3:17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

Luke 11:37-45 When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. ³⁸But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first *wash* before the meal. Then the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also. But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you. “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it.” One of the experts in the law answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.” Jesus replied, “And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.”

OBSERVATION

The crowd Jesus is talking to is not the religious elite who have their lives all together. They do not know the Bible and they aren’t going to win Bible Jeopardy. It’s for those who feel like they are an outsider. It’s for those who don’t feel very religious -- those who don’t feel like they quite measure up. That’s good news for us, too. Then Jesus was invited to eat at a Pharisee’s house. His host was offended that Jesus didn’t wash His hands before the meal, but that was only a tradition among the Jews. Jesus used this as a metaphor when He said, “You are concerned with looking good on the outside, but inside there is only greed and wickedness.” They looked clean on the outside, but they were neglecting the

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

poor – neglecting justice. These Pharisees were concerned about sitting in the important seats, about people calling them by their titles, demanding that doors be opened for them and being at the front of the line.²

QUESTION: Whom do you know who looks good on the outside yet is not generous in loving others?

QUESTION: The Pharisees demonstrated great pride in all that they did. What are you doing to diminish your pride and elevate your love and kindness toward others?

APPLICATION

Jesus wants us to be **righteous** inside and out. Its definition is “the quality of being morally right or justifiable.” Yet the word Jesus uses is so much richer and more compelling. It is the standard of being right with God and being right in the world. It encompasses holiness and justice. Being a follower of Jesus is a commitment to personal holiness and cultural healing and wholeness. They go hand-in-hand. In our culture there is a division between **holiness** and **justice**. For some it’s like only one matters and the other is irrelevant. Some people want the **Kingdom** without a **King** and other people want the **King** without a **Kingdom**. Some people want **Jesus** without **justice** and some people want **justice** without **Jesus**. The kingdom of God is about both -- being right with God in our hearts and being right with God in our world. We need to understand God’s vision of righteousness because if we fall on one side or the other -- **inward holiness** or **outward justice** -- then we miss what Jesus is calling us to do in His new Kingdom.

QUESTION: Where do you stand in the areas of being holy and just toward others? Do you hunger and thirst to be a holy and just person? Why/why not?

1) INWARD: PERSONAL HOLINESS Doesn’t it seem like every few months there’s another high profile Christian leader who has moral failure? He gets caught in an affair or stealing money and you find out it wasn’t even a one-time sin -- it went on for years and years. Every time that happens it makes pastors’ jobs a little harder. People inside the church wonder if they can trust their pastor and people outside the church are more skeptical than before. Holiness matters – character matters. We’re not talking about salvation; we are not saved by being good or by being better than the other people around us -- we are saved by grace not by works. God’s command to the Children of Israel was NOT “Obey me so that I will love you.” It was, “Obey me so that it will go well with you.” He is actually saying, “Happy are those who strive to do the right thing.”

QUESTION: What is the greatest regret you have about your life?

QUESTION: What is the difference between grace and mercy? How do you demonstrate both in your life?

QUESTION: When have you experienced God’s grace and mercy?

Isn’t it true that your greatest regret is about the time when you had a choice between right and wrong and chose to do wrong? When Jesus says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,”

QUESTION: When have you chosen to do the right thing even though it cost you somehow?

2) OUTWARD: JUSTICE In the religious world where Jesus lived and the religious world that perhaps some of you were raised -- a person could love God and treat people poorly. But Jesus redefines loving God -- He tells us that the way you love God is by loving people. Here’s where some people get this wrong: They want to do justice without a connection to JESUS.

QUESTION : How do you know if something is just or unjust?

QUESTION: When have you acted unjustly? What were the consequences?

Justice is an outflow of God’s RIGHTNESS. It is because God has written this on the human heart. We can’t claim to love God if we don’t meet the needs of the least of these – if we don’t stand up when we see injustice.

QUESTION: What do you hunger and thirst for? What are you chasing after in your life?

Holiness and justice are God’s vision for us. Maybe He is trying to get our attention because there is an area of our lives that is not surrendered to Him -- an area of personal unholiness. Or perhaps we have neglected bringing God’s justice and love. Here’s Jesus’ promise: When we hunger and thirst to bring God’s Kingdom here --His righteousness and justice -- we will be filled -- we will be satisfied.

QUESTION: When have you felt contentment and satisfaction in your life? What was going on during that time?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, “as the deer pants for streams of water”³, help us to thirst for holiness, righteousness and justice in our relationships with You and all others around us. Help us to bring Your Kingdom to earth today. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

² Matthew 23:27-28

³ Psalm 42:1

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: Whom do you know who looks good on the outside yet is not generous in loving others?

QUESTION: The Pharisees demonstrated great pride in all that they did. What are you doing to diminish your pride and elevate your love and kindness toward others?

QUESTION: Where do you stand in the areas of being holy and just toward others? Do you hunger and thirst to be a holy and just person? Why/why not?

QUESTION: What is the greatest regret you have about your life?

QUESTION: What is the difference between grace and mercy? How do you demonstrate both in your life?

QUESTION: When have you experienced God's grace and mercy?

QUESTION: When have you chosen to do the right thing even though it cost you somehow?

QUESTION : How do you know if something is just or unjust?

QUESTION: When have you acted unjustly? What were the consequences?

QUESTION: What do you hunger and thirst for? What are you chasing after in your life?

QUESTION: When have you felt contentment and satisfaction in your life? What was going on during that time?