

Matthew 5:6

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 June 2021

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 5. And let me just welcome those who are on YouTube. I forgot to welcome you earlier. It's great to have you. We'd love to be able to get to know you a little bit. And there's quite a few people watching our YouTube. We don't know who you are, which is great in a way, but it would be good to welcome you and introduce our church to you. And I should thank the people that do the YouTube each week for Yuki and Gio and for others, and also the sound and PA people. We are really thankful. It's a bit of a thankless task, isn't it? So thank you.

So we're going through the Beatitudes. And like I said before the reading, we're really looking at these statements, eight great statements, and trying to expand the Christian life. What does the Christian life look like from looking at them?

According to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only person in the world who is truly happy is the Christian. And that's the whole point of what Jesus is saying in the Beatitudes.

Eight great statements, eight great statements, and they all begin with the word blessed or happy. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

I worry sometimes that churches like ours give the impression that holiness and happiness cannot coexist. And nothing could be further from the truth.

[1 : 31] Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. According to what Jesus says here, the only way to be fulfilled, the only way to be satisfied, is the way of holiness.

And so holiness and happiness go together. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Well, do you know what righteousness is? We've been looking at it, haven't we, in Romans.

Righteousness means it's the way things ought to be. I'm sure, from time to time in our better moments, we've got a longing, each one of us, that things can be different.

Righteousness is the way that things are meant to be. Things aren't what they used to be. And the Bible agrees with that, doesn't it? St. Augustine, in that famous prayer, he says, Things are not what they used to be.

And so we were made for God. And we were made to be in a right relationship with God. And we were made to live a life that pleased God. We were made to live a life that brought pleasure to God.

[2 : 56] And that's not the way things are now. Things are not the way they used to be. So, you children, I expect this happens in your house. And you've got people around in your home.

And you are behaving in a way that you shouldn't behave. You've forgotten how to behave. And what do your mum and dad do? They tell you off, don't they? And then you carry on behaving in a way that you shouldn't behave.

What do they do then? They put you on the stairs, don't they? They banish you to the stairs. They send you to the stairs. Do you remember what that felt like? You've forgotten how to behave.

And so you're banished to the stairs. And according to the Bible, we have been banished from the presence of God. And we've been banished to the stairs. Because we don't know how to behave properly.

That's what the Bible tells us about the world in which we live in human condition. We've been banished from God's presence. Because we've been cast out from the Garden of Eden.

[3 : 58] Things ain't what they used to be. And things ain't what they ought to be. We're not what we should be. You know that. We're not in a right relationship with him.

Things have gone wrong and we've been banished. What's it like on the stairs, children? Do you love being on the stairs? Is that one of your favourite things in life?

To be stuck on the stairs for half an hour? Or an hour? Or three hours? It's horrible, isn't it? It's boring. That's why we're restless as a race.

One of my friends was a GP. He became a minister. And he said that one of the reasons that he made that switch was because he found that most of the patients that came to see him as a GP had nothing wrong with them.

They'd come to the surgery again and again and again. But they didn't actually have anything wrong with them. And he said that many of the complaints that he was facing had spiritual causes. Dr. L. Jones said the same thing.

[5 : 01] So many diseases were just that. They were dis-easus. People were not at ease with their environment. With their life.

That's our world. We're restless. We're bored. Empty. Many people live far closer to the borders of despair than they're prepared to admit.

Things ain't what they ought to be. Things aren't right. And maybe you haven't discovered that yet. Maybe you've not lived long enough to discover that.

But you will. Life without God is like peeling an onion. You know what peeling an onion is like? You peel it, don't you?

Layer after layer after layer. And there are tears after tears. And then you get to the middle and there's just nothing. And that's life for many people. They live day after day, week after week, year after week, year after year.

[5 : 59] And they peel layer after layer after layer. And all you're left with is tears. There's nothing to it. It's empty. Things ain't what they ought to be. And Jesus says, blessed is the man or the woman or the boy or the girl who longs for things to be what they ought to be.

That's what he means when he says, blessed are those who hang out and thirst for righteousness. Righteousness is the way things ought to be. And blessed are they who long for that.

Blessed are those that long that things could be the way that they were intended to be. And you and I were meant to enjoy God and to please him with our lives.

But here we are at odds with God, at odds with ourselves, at odds with one another and even at odds with our environment. And happiness is being right with God and right with ourselves and right with one another and right with our environment.

And blessed are those who long for that. They'll get what they long for, Jesus says. And so there's great promise, isn't there? Blessed are those that realise that things are wrong.

[7 : 16] And they long for things to be put right. They will be satisfied. They will be filled. They will get what they long for. Blessed are those who long to be in a right relationship with God.

Blessed are those who long to live a life that pleases him. And they will be filled. They will be satisfied. Now this longing isn't a vague, wistful longing that we sometimes feel for things to be different.

Notice Jesus puts it very strongly here. We live in a country that knows very little, really, about what it means to be hungry or thirsty.

But Jesus says, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Food and drink are essential for life. You can't go without it for very long. You need water. What is it, three days you can go without it? You can live a bit longer without food. Depends how big you are, I suppose. But you can't live very long without food.

[8 : 24] You certainly can't live very long without drink. And these are life's essentials. And what Jesus is asking us tonight is this. Is righteousness that important to you?

Is it as essential to you as your food and drink? And do you hunger and thirst for it? Jesus did. Jesus is the very best example, isn't he?

That's what we've seen so far. Of his own words. People say to me, practice what you preach. But you can never say that to Jesus.

Jesus is always the supreme example of his teaching. It's why we read John 4. He's had a busy day. He's not on a bite to eat all day. He's been dealing with this woman.

And then as a result of her testimony, the whole city turns out to meet him. They crowd around him. His disciples come back from town. Having found some provisions. And they're concerned for Jesus.

[9 : 30] They say, you've got nothing to eat all day. And they try to entice him to eat something. And they're concerned, aren't they, for his physical well-being. And do you notice what Jesus said

to them in John 4.32? He says, I have food to eat which you know nothing about.

And they didn't understand. They're on a different wavelength. And they say to one another, well, has somebody brought him some to eat? And Jesus said to them this. He said, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. That is meat and drink for me.

That is my bread and butter. That is more essential than food to me.

That is what life is to me. That is what life is to me. To do the will of him who sent me. And finish his work. John Knox.

John Knox. John Knox. John Knox, the Scottish reformer. He's a great Scottish reformer. He's preaching at St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh. He was so old and decrepit.

[10:35] They used to have to carry him into the pulpit. That's how concerned he was to do the will of his father. When others would have retired and put their feet up.

John Knox was still preaching. And they carry him into the pulpit. They had to prop him up. Against the desk because he couldn't stand up. He was an old man. But one contemporary account describes his preaching in these terms.

Before he had long begun his sermon. Knox's voice had regained its old trumpet call. And he was like to ding the pulpit into blads.

What does that mean? He was like to ding the pulpit into blads. That means he was as likely to knock the pulpit into splinters. And leap out of it.

This old man. They carried him up. They propped him against the pulpit. But as he got going. The spirit of God comes upon him. That was the will of God for his life.

[11:39] And as he was doing the will of God. So he was gaining strength and life and vigour.

There's nothing more satisfying. Nothing more animating. Nothing more blessed than doing the will of God. This is my meat and drink.

Says Jesus. I've got food to eat you know nothing about. I've got something that gives me vigour and strength and life and happiness and joy. And it's to do God's will.

Can you say that tonight? I love chariots of fire. I hope you love that film. If you've not seen that film. You've got to see that film. And you've got Harold Abrahams.

Who's desperate to win 100 metres. And he says I've got 10 seconds to prove my existence. 10 seconds to prove my existence. And then you've got Eric Little.

There was something far more than 100 metres race. Who wouldn't race 100 metres because it was a Sabbath day. And he said this. He said I believe God made me for a purpose.

[12:41] But he also made me fast. And when I run. I feel his pleasure. Think of someone else. Think of William Wilberforce.

You know. With others he was one of the men responsible for getting rid of the slave trade. He was very unimpressive. He was a weak little man physically. He was a very small man.

He had nicknamed him. When he started as an MP in the House of Commons. They called him the Minnow. The Minnow. And when he'd get up to speak. You can imagine it. Can't you? A bit like they do now.

They all laugh at him in the House of Commons. They used to ridicule him. And laugh at him. But then. As the fire and the power came upon him.

And they used to crowd the benches to hear him speak. And the saying goes around. That the widow has now become a whale. What's the explanation of that? That man was doing the will of his father in heaven.

[13:42] Wilberforce wasn't there to feed his ego. Read the biography by William Hague. It's a brilliant read. He wasn't there for the hungry. For the praise and the recognition of the world. That wasn't why he was in Parliament.

Why was he there? He was hungry and thirsty for righteousness. He was hungry. That things would be done right. And put right. Hungry that things would be done God's way.

That was why he was in Parliament. That was his meat and drink. That was his reason for being. To do God's will. That's where he found fulfilment. Where he found life. And Jesus says. Blessed are those.

Who hunger and thirst. Whose meat and drink. It is. It is. And so for them. Christianity is not a little thing on the side.

It's not the icing on the cake. It isn't something. For them to do in their spare time. It isn't something for those. Who've got an interest in those things. No, no.

[14:39] It is food and drink. It's more important than food and drink. They hunger and thirst. To do God's will. To be right with him. And live lives that are pleasing to him.

And they long to see that in society. And so the Bible says. Righteousness exalts a nation. Sin is a reproach to any people.

And so the people of God. They long for things to be put right. In their own lives. And in their families. And in society. They long for this. Because they are the children of God.

Now does that describe you? You see. I think the Beatitudes ask us a question. And it's this. Am I a real Christian? The Beatitudes.

Aren't they? They are an identikit picture. Of what a Christian is. Do you recognize yourself in this Beatitude? I ask the question to people sometimes.

[15:40] Would you call yourself a Christian? And they say. This great phrase. They say. Well I don't do anybody any harm. It's really exciting isn't it? You want to say to you. Does that really satisfy you?

To go around. Not doing anyone any harm. What a motto for life. It doesn't sound like. Hunger and thirst for righteousness. And so.

A real Christian. Longs. To do as much good as he can. Hungry for righteousness. Can't get enough of it. An insatiable appetite for the things of God.

A longing to please God. The letter to the Hebrews puts it like this. It's a different metaphor. But the same picture. So Hebrews 12.

14 says. Strive for peace. With everyone. And for the holiness. Without which no one will see the Lord. And the word.

[16:46] There. Literally means persecute. Think about that. Strive. Persecute. For holiness.

Think of the apostle Paul. He's. Coming from Damascus. He wants to persecute Christians. He is. Striving.

After them. He's put everything into it. He's. Gone to the authorities. And he's got letters. Of authorities. And he goes into the. City streets. And the towns.

All around and about. Every street. Every house. There's no. Stone. Left. Unturned. For the apostle Paul. He wants to kill off the church. He's tracking them down. He's after their blood.

He's hunting them. Well. Well. Says the writer. Of the Hebrews. He's using the same word there. That's how you should be. For holiness. You'll never see God.

[17:46] Unless you're a hungry man. Or woman. You'll never see the Lord. I don't know. It's like now. Children. But. But. When I came home. From school. Used to get home.

Either kind of. Twenty. To four. If you had sport. After. About half. Or you. You were so hungry. I don't know. Is it like that now? Really. Really hungry. And.

Insatiably. Hungry. Don't you? You feel a bit like Esau. When he. Is coming. From. The fields. So hungry. After you've been in. From school. And. What do you do?

Well. If mum's not in the kitchen. You. You open the cupboards. And you. You look in the cupboards. You. You can hardly wait. For. For the stale bread. To come out of the toaster. You.

You ransack the house. Looking for food. Because you. You're hungry. It's a bit like. Isn't it an obsession? There's only ginger nut biscuits there.

[18:42] But you'll eat the ginger nut biscuits. Because there's nothing. You're so hungry. It's a consuming desire. You've got to satisfy that hunger. What happens when.

Your mum butters you some bread. And puts it in front of you. Do you play with it. And roll it into. Kind of shapes. No you don't do. You don't get the food.

And make little mountains. Out of it. And that sort of thing. No you eat it. If you've never seen food in your life. You get it down here. And the writer of Hebrews. Is saying. Unless you track down holiness.

Unless you're hungry. For holiness. You'll never see God. And so it's not a case. Is it. Of saying. Lord make me as holy.

As I can get away with. And still be thought of. As a Christian. That is the prayer. Of the Western church. Isn't it? Lord. Make me as holy. As I can get away with. And still be thought of.

[19:39] As a Christian. It's really different. From someone like. Robert Murray McShane. Who prayed. Lord make me as holy. As it's possible. For a saved. Sinner to be. That's being hungry.

Make me as holy.

As it's possible. To be. For a saved sinner. This side of glory. And Jesus says. Unless you're hungry. For holiness. You won't see God. You won't be blessed.

You won't be filled. Blessed are those. Who hunger and thirst. And they. And only they. That's where the emphasis. Is in the text. Only they.

Will be filled. Those who've got an appetite. For the things of God. God. How is your appetite. Appetite these days. And I expect.

Many of us would say. This. We would say. It's. It's not very strong. That doesn't matter. If it's there. That it's there.

[20 : 36] Is the main thing. Do you have an appetite. For holiness? Yes. And perhaps. Tonight you come.

And all you can come with. Is a. Rumbling tummy. You say. That's all I can. That's all I can do. I've. I've got an aching void. I wish.

I really wish. Things were different. In my life. I really. Things were right. In my life. But they aren't. But that's all right. If you've got that.

You are there. Jesus said. Blessed are those. Who are hungry. For holiness. He doesn't say. Blessed are those. Who've arrived. Because. You won't arrive. Until you get to heaven. Blessed are those. Who are hungry. Blessed are those.

[21 : 39] Who are aware. Of that rumbling tummy. That aching void. Within. And so. Tonight. If you're even aware.

Of how far you are. From the image. Of Christ. And you long. To be more like him. You are blessed. Maybe you've lost.

Your appetite. So there's junk food. Around isn't there. And you can lose. Your appetite. You can lose. Your appetite. For the things of God. Maybe you've never.

Had an appetite. For these things. It's an illustration. That I love. And you are fed up. Of hearing it. I think. I've probably used it. Every six to eight weeks. For the last. Eighteen years.

But it's the ugly duckling. Have you heard this before? It's a great illustration though. The ugly duckling. Wasn't happy. Was he? And why? Well because he was a swan.

[22 : 34] Of course. And he didn't know that. He thought he was a duckling. He was born with the other ducklings. And he lived with them. And he adopted the lifestyle. Of a duckling. And yet.

The ugly duckling. Wasn't happy. He thought he was a duckling. But all the time. He was a. Swan. And that's the problem.

In the world. Isn't it? What's the greatest tragedy. In Ealing's life? The greatest tragedy.

In Ealing's life. It's not. That people are going to hell. As tragic as that is. But there are men. And women. And boys and girls. Who were made to glorify God. And enjoy him forever. And they've been made for God.

And they've not been made. To scratch around. In this world. With their head down in the dust. Pecking at this. And pecking at that. Looking for happiness. Looking for something. To cheer them up. Scrabbling around in the dust.

[23 : 33] Thinking that once we get out. Of lockdown. Well all will be well. This will give us a bit of relief. This will cheer us up a bit. You've not been made for that. We need to say to our friends.

And our neighbours. Don't we in this country. God has put eternity in your heart. You've been made in the image. And the likeness of God. You've been made for fellowship with him.

You've been made to share the life of God. You've been made to live in such a way. That pleases him. And that's what you've been made for. And that is where your happiness is found. And it's only when you come to realise that.

When you realise that you've been made for God. That true happiness can be found. So let me ask you as I draw a little closer.

Are you fed up with this life? Isaiah says this. He says. Why do you spend your money. On that which does not satisfy. On that which is not bread.

[24 : 37] And your labour for that which does not satisfy. He's exactly right isn't he? That's exactly what people do. People who were made for God. You and I were made.

With a hunger for God. With an appetite for God. And what we've done. Is we've tried to satisfy that. With a hunger that is not bread. And that's what this Samaritan woman did.

That we read about. She tried to find happiness in relationships. One after another. And the man she was living with.

Was now number six. She did five broken relationships. And every time she thought this is Mr. Wright. Things will be different now.

From now on happiness will be just around the corner. But it never was. And the grass is always greener on the other side. But it isn't. And that's how it was with this woman.

[25 : 31] She was desperate to be happy like everyone else. And she thought that she could find happiness in relationships. But she couldn't find happiness. Her life was empty. As empty as the water pots that she's carrying.

But her empty life. You asked me for living water.

Water that would quench your thirst. And I can give it to you Jesus says. And she says to me Lord give me that water. I'm fed up with this drab and empty and boring life.

I'm fed up with things. I'm not right. I don't know how to put them right. And every time I try to put my hand on things.

Jesus. I just make things worse. And so she says Lord give me that water. I don't want to keep coming back with an empty life. To try and find some kind of fill up.

[26 : 32] Lord give me the water. Quench my thirst. That will satisfy me. And Jesus says. Go fetch your husband. It's a really strange thing to say.

Some commentators want to say. Well there's something wrong isn't there. There must be two stories that are jumbled up. Early translators must have got this wrong. It's not. You see Jesus is saying. To this woman. Yes I'll give you happiness.

I'll give you satisfaction. I'll give you that life that you were meant to have. That's why I've come into the world. I've come to put things right. Between sinners and a holy God.

I've come to put things right. But woman. You can't have that life. Unless you're willing to do something about your sex life.

You've had five husbands. You've broken God's law. I want you to be happy. But you can't be happy. Unless you're prepared to be holy. Go fetch your husband.

[27 : 37] That's. Your bit of setting. Sin. That's the area of the problem. That's the point for the woman. Where she's broken God's law. That's the point where she's got to do something.

And so you remember on another occasion. The rich young ruler comes to Jesus. And he runs to Jesus. He's a successful businessman. Everyone knew him. In Mark's gospel.

We're told. He comes running to Jesus. He kneels before him. And he cries out. Jesus. I want eternal life. I want to go to heaven. That's never happened to me as a preacher. We would think if somebody did that tonight.

Wouldn't we? We would think that's absolutely wonderful. And that's what this man. What did Jesus do? Does he say. Oh wonderful. You want eternal life. I'm going to give it to you. No he doesn't. Jesus says. Go sell all that you have. And give it to the poor. Why does he say it to that man? He says it to that man. Because that man was a greedy man. And that was for him.

[28 : 41] The sin that needed to be dealt with. To be put to death. And when you read about it. In the gospels. This guy actually.

He's a nice guy. He's a likeable man. He's a decent. Clean. Living man. He's not like the woman in John 4. He's decent. Respectable. But the issue in his life.

Was covetousness. And he comes to Jesus. And he says. I want eternal life. I want this happiness. And Jesus puts his finger on the issue. He says.

You can have eternal life. But only if you're willing to say goodbye to your sin. And I don't just mean theoretically. And I don't just mean.

Kind of mouth some words after me. And if you pray this prayer. Christ. You're a Christian. You have eternal life. No. He says. I want you to forsake that sin.

[29 : 40] To walk away from it. Sell what you have. And give to the poor. To say goodbye to your sin. And mean it. And we're told aren't we.

In the gospels. That the young man. Was sad. And he went away. And Jesus let him go. Unconverted.

Unhappy. And unsaved. Because he wasn't prepared to leave his sin. Unhappy. And so I'm saying to you tonight. If you are not prepared to leave your sin.

Whatever it is. And it will be different. If you're not prepared to leave your sin. You cannot have Jesus. And you cannot have what he's got to offer.
And you can't enter into the benefits. Of what he has died to secure. Unless you're prepared to leave your sin. And you can't ever know what it is.
[30 : 42] To be right with God. And to live a life. That is satisfying. And pleasing to God. And so will you let your sin go tonight. And will you turn from it.
Because blessed are those. Who hunger and thirst. For righteousness. For they should be filled. And as we come to the table.
How do we come? We come hungry. And we come thirsty. And we come knowing that none but Christ can satisfy.
None other name for me. That in Jesus Christ. And only in Jesus Christ. Is there satisfaction. And so turn from your sin.
And turn to him. Let's pray. Amen.