

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
July 24, 2016

## Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst

Matthew 5:1-6

5:1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

5:2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

### **1. Meaning of “Blessed”**

Lord Jesus proclaimed eight blessings to the crowds on the mountain. First is “blessed are the poor in spirit”, second is “blessed are those who mourn”, and third is “blessed are the meek” and we’ve already learned all of them. Back then, there were many people who were poor and lamented. The word “meek” has the meaning of “being oppressed and lose hope”, so I would think that there were many people who were oppressed and being desperate. Lord Jesus promised salvation to those people and proclaimed “blessed” and “blessing”, but “being blessed” refers to the internal happiness of those who believed in Jesus Christ.

Gracious God responds to our faith and prayers and solve the problems that we have, but in addition to that, God blesses us who

pray for solutions and strengthen us. God not only changes the circumstance that we are in but also changes our inner selves. The salvation from Jesus Christ not only removes and releases us from all the pain, sorrow and suffering but also changes ourselves through these experiences.

The problems we have are complicated because they have materialistic, psychological and spiritual aspects. Therefore, just taking care of materialistic cannot solve the problems. We often hear that a poor family suddenly receives money and improves the financial condition, but resulting in more problems within the family, just as the Bible says “Man shall not live by bread alone.” (Luke 4:4) and “One's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (Luke 12:15).

God sees our problem and works on it, but His eyes are directed toward people who suffer with the problem and pray for the solution. God loves us and works on us so that we will be strengthened and able to come closer to God by going through the problems, as well as we are released from the problems.

Therefore, when you have a problem, do not only look at the problem but also look at yourself. When you pray for the solution, pray that you will be changed. Of course you don't need to think that only you are to be blamed for the problems. Even if you drive a car very carefully and follow the law, another car that ignores traffic signals might hit you, so you don't need to blame yourself. Moreover, often times it may not lead to the solution by pointing fingers to a particular individual. The important thing is how to face God. By reaching the spiritual and religious resolution, you will be led to a real

solution.

I previously received a small card with a size of name card from an anonymous person at a restaurant. I still keep it. It says,

“Dear Jesus, I have problem ... It's me.”

“Dear Child, I have the answer ... It's Me.”

God never ignores our need. He always provides us with what we need. But He is more interested in our inner selves. He works on our spirit so that we will be healed, strengthened and cleaned. Therefore, let's say “Dear Lord, I have a problem, that is me” and come to Lord. Then we can hear Him saying “Dear Child, I do have the answer, it is Me”. This is how the living relationship between God and us is strengthened. This is exactly a blessing that Christ gives to us.

## **2. Meaning of “Righteousness”**

Today we are going to learn the fourth blessing, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” Here, our Lord talks about the spiritual and religious hunger rather than actual starvation, because the Bible added, “for righteousness” after “hunger and thirst.”

By the way, what does “righteousness” mean in fact? First we would think of the social justice. In the time of Roman Empire, the people of Judah remained in hard situation. For example, Matthew 5:41 says, “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.” The Roman soldiers could call Judah whenever they want and instantly order to carry their belongings. Moreover, the Roman soldiers could even kill Judah people at their own options. It is very easy to expect the people of Judah would have been urgently hunger and thirst for justice.

Next, “righteousness” has the meaning of salvation. God is righteous and judge the world at His own righteousness. In the Bible, Psalm 96:13 says, “He comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.” Isaiah 51:5 also says, “My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples.” Jewish people were based on those verses, and eagerly longed for that God would judge the country which oppress them, and bring the salvation to God’s people.

However, at the time God judge the world according to His righteousness, no one could stand before Him as the righteous ones, even though they were the people of God. In the Bible, lots of verses mention that the people of God are becoming evil. Additionally, everyone has sins and iniquities as person. Psalm 38:4 says, “For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.” Romans 3:10 also says, “None is righteous, no, not one.” Before the Holy God, no one could be righteous without any sins and iniquities.

The Bible, however, describes the prayer in Psalm 51:9, “Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.” God forgives and cleans those who recognize their sin and iniquities and repent, and makes them to be righteous in His eyes. Sinners of iniquities are allowed to put of God’s righteousness and stand before the Holy God as the perfect righteous ones.

This was already written in the prophecy of The Old Testament. Isaiah 61:10 writes, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;

he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.” In every country, the bride and groom wear the beautiful, superb dresses. Even at the time of estate of the realm, people could wear the exclusive garments like for prince and princess at marriage ceremony. God accept the sinners as His prince and princess, and clothe them with the best garments and robes.

In The New Testament, the “garment of righteous” is Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus Christ was the only one who had no sins, and the Son of God. The Son atoned all sins of people and crucified on the Cross. For this, the righteousness is given to the believers. Galatians 3:27 suggests, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” God looks at the believers through Christ, so people can stand before God not as sinners, but as righteous ones, by putting on Christ.

### **3. Meaning of “Hunger and Thirst”**

Moreover, the righteousness that Lord Jesus describes means that the people who are justified will actually become righteous. God gave sinners the position of “righteous ones” and the status of “God’s children”. God justified the person who are actually not righteous. Then, do we still need to become actually righteous since God has already justified us? Since God called us, believers, saints and children of God, He definitely wants us to become holy and behave like children of God. The believers clothed themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not mean that they wear Lord Jesus like an overcoat that we can put on and take off whenever we want to. When

we put on Christ, we are absorbed by Christ and become one with Him. They shall be transformed to become like Christ in themselves.

Teleologically speaking, to be justified is called “justification” and to become righteous is called “sanctification”. Teleologically, there is a distinct difference; however, “justification” and “sanctification” are the not-separated experience in Christian life. The believers are sanctified based on being justified; and confirm their justification as they are sanctified. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says. “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” In this verse, “justification” and “sanctification” are combined.

Therefore, “hunger and thirst for righteousness” means that the believers become righteous, in other words, they look for to be sanctified. To be justified or justification has been fulfilled; however, to be sanctified or sanctification will grow until we arrive Heaven. Therefore, the believers are always hunger and thirst. Christians know the peace coming from the forgiveness of sins. However, at the same time, they know that they are still sinners and pray hard for the forgiveness of their sins. They know the true joy of being saved and be proud of being called in the name of Christ. However, at the same time, they need to go to God as forgiven sinners. We are “Saints” and “Sinners”. “Sinners” but “Saint”. Being “Hunger and Thirst” but “Satisfied”. “Satisfied” but “Hunger and Thirst”. How weird it is. However, this is the reality of true believers.

We, as human beings, are the only ones who are hunger and thirst for not only foods and drinks but also spirituality. Also, not only being hunger and thirst for fulfilling their wishes but also being hunger and

thirst for the righteousness of God, which fulfilled both in this world and in ourselves. This can be done by only Christians. In Japanese, the Kanji character equivalent to “righteousness” is found in the words like “*Shugi-shucho*” and “*Giri-Ninjo*”. “*Shugi-shucho*” means “principles and position” and “*Giri-ninjo*” can be translated as “duty and humanity”. However the “righteousness” in such words is “the righteousness of man” and belongs to the world. It is not “the righteousness of God” and doesn’t belong to the Kingdom. Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Let us seek not for “principles and position” of our own or “duty and humanity” of the world. But let us seek “the righteousness of God”. And then, we will be able to taste and feel the true satisfaction in “Hunger and Thirst”.

### **(Prayer)**

Dear Father God, we feel not satisfied when our wish and desire are not fulfilled; however, we have not been “hunger and thirst” for your justice in this world and for the righteousness in ourselves. We assure that we are loved by you, Holy One. Help us to seek for your justification and sanctification seriously. Because of it, we shall be able to receive and enjoy your blessings. In the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.