

<b>Series</b>	Sermon on the Mount
<b>Study</b>	Study 3
<b>Topic</b>	Hunger and thirst for righteousness
<b>Reference</b>	Matthew 5
<b>Speaker</b>	Dr Peter Ng

In this presentation we will be dealing with the rest of the beatitudes to conclude. Today, we will be dealing with hunger and thirst for righteousness. Let's look at the word righteousness. When we talk about righteousness what images does it conjure up in our minds? In my mind, coming from a Roman Catholic family, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, righteousness is a term that I associate with priests with the Pope. Men would find robes who are quiet, never spontaneous, serious, walking around with a long face. If that's the picture of righteousness, I can't imagine myself wanting spontaneously to hunger and thirst for that sort of righteousness. It seems counterintuitive to me, but when we talk about righteousness, when we're being, marginalize or injustice has meted out to us even as children, the first thing that children will say, it's not fair. I've been badly treated. All of us when we have been let go from my jobs, the first thing we will say, it is not fair. We're looking for injustice. And the fact that we really against injustice means we love righteousness in our hearts. So what does righteousness really mean?

Righteousness is basically a personal conformity to God's will and on a societal front, it is a societal conformity, which result in freedom from pressure, civil rights, justice in the cause and integrity in business. But why is righteousness so important? Righteousness is important because we are made in the image of God. In Genesis 1:27,

*Genesis 1:27 (ESV) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

So we are created as representative of God, to relate to him and also to reflect who he is. When they look at us, they're supposed to see what God looks like and so therefore, conformity to what he is, is vitally important to who we are. It is a function of our identity. Righteousness is in the context of Matthew 5, the first four beatitudes, those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek shall inherit the earth, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness talks about some inward transformation of our hearts, which will then result in righteousness, which is the output evidence of our spiritual transformation inside. So we have either two pictures of righteousness in our daily lives. One is empty religiosity, which was much the life and pattern of the Pharisees or religious figures where they follow a bunch of rules and rituals, and really devoid of real love or righteousness inside, or a practical conformity to God's will where we actually get our hands dirty. We really help people. We're merciful, we are pure in heart, we are peacemakers.

Now Jesus is a picture of righteousness. John chapter 4:34,

*John 4:34 (ESV) Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.*

Jesus is the paramount son of God. So therefore he is a reflection of who God is. And so therefore is every living waking moment and desire, his food is to do God's will. And so when he was tempted to

sin Matthew 4:4, he was tempted to turn stone into bread, even though he was starving after 40 days of fasting, he says

*Matthew 4:4 (ESV) But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

So therefore even in the face of real hunger, his deeper hunger is a spiritual hunger for conformity to God's will. So the picture that is painted for us, where we are hungering for righteousness, which means every waking moment, we're reminiscing, we are anticipating as if we're going for a huge Chinese banquet. We're just salivating. We're saving our stomach. That is the kind of enthusiasm. Imagine the old Carlsberg ad of the beautiful glass of beer which is cold and the frost simply overflows from the top. And you really feel thirsty for that. That is that picture of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. And we actually recognized righteousness when we see this. It really touches our souls. It resonates with us when we see in society, for example, during these COVID-19 crisis, there were so many occasions where strangest did kind deeds. I remember there was a man who actually went to a restaurant and paid a \$2,500 us dollar tip to be divided among all the waiters and waitresses, because he knew when the crisis hit, they will be out of a job. There was another one who gave \$900. There was another gentleman who owned a factory who used to make alcohol and he turned it to be totally dedicated to the production of hand sanitizers in response to the COVID crisis.

What about a huge contingent of doctors and nurses from Cuba who went all the way to Italy to help out in the face of danger. The same time when we actually see evil, unrighteous acts, we react against it. We get angry, we feel sad and hurt. What about that Australian gentleman who went over to New Zealand and with a machine gun mowed down more than 50 Muslim worshipers in a mosque. And every year CNN has this great program. This program is not about rich people or famous people. It's about ordinary people who despite all the odds and great sacrifice actually give their lives to worthwhile projects to help their fellow man. It could be starting up schools with charity. It should be helping disabled people, but there are about 10 heroes, which they honor every year. And when we see that it really warms our heart. Why? Because we are actually hardwired, because we were made in the image of God to respond to such things. At the same time, we look at the wanted poster of evil people who will react against it, which is the reason why in our country, some years ago, a huge numbers of the population went out on the streets wearing yellow. Why? Because the society, the government was totally corrupt and they wanted to react against it. So we all react against unrighteousness and we love righteousness.

So blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied. So one day, those who have that as the overwhelming desire, God will actually satisfy them. It was so satisfying, the word here is translated, they will be filled to be overflowing. There will be, society will be filled with love and peace and joy and holiness will shape the entire creation. Now, I want to look at this verse in Philippians 3.

*Phil 3: 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

What Paul is saying is that there is a paradox, we live in the in-between where the kingdom of God is inaugurated, but not yet fully consummated because he is not here. So therefore this in between

produces a paradox, a tension that actually spurs our growth. He says, he has not achieved it, not that I've already obtained this or already imperfect. He knows he is far from perfect. He's far from conformity to God's will, but his ambition. I press on to make it my own. He presses on so that he continues to live in conformity or want to live in conformity to God. Why? Because Jesus paid the penalty of death for our unrighteousness, and so therefore because it's paid for us, we love and reciprocate in the end and make him our own. And what we do is that we forget what lies behind all the things that puffed us up, all the things that made for all self-esteem and made for our self-righteousness. We leave that behind. And what we do every day is we strive towards what lies ahead. Do you know what lies ahead? The head is the goal of the prize of the upward call of Christ Jesus. It is cast so beautifully as if God is calling us drawing up towards the kind of life that is reflective of him in heaven. So that is the tension and that must be the tension in our lives all the time. We're not yet there, but we're moving. And that is an overwhelming desire in our hearts.

Now let's talk about inbuilt cycle of growth and we find that the more a person conforms to God's will, the more he does righteousness. The more he lives in righteous conformity to God, he gets a blessing. The more attractive the goal becomes, he gets to like it. And then the greater advances, so the more he is righteous, the more he feels that it's a worthwhile goal, he is blessed by the Lord and the more he wants to do it. He doesn't do righteous acts by holding up his nose as if it's something horrible to do. It actually has an inbuilt cycle of which God blesses you and gives you the kind of love poured into your spirit by the Holy spirit.

But this built in cycle requires us to make a decision. A decision is to flee from evil. 1-Timothy 6:8 says,

*1 Timothy 6:6-8 (ESV) But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.*

And then he reads on.

*1 Timothy 6:9-10 (ESV) But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

So to hunger and thirst righteousness is one comprehensive act. Verse 11,

*1 Tim 6: 11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.*

While we hunger and thirst and pursue it, we will automatically turn away from evil things. So the child of God, hungers and thirsts for righteousness, because he is made in the image of God.

So naturally the son would like to follow the father. Remember when we were children, you can see always the children wanting to mimic the father, whether they are carrying the suitcase to work or carrying dumbbells or playing with hand phones, there's a natural tendency and the reason why they do that is because love is the motivating factor for righteousness. Matthew 23:37, when they asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment,

*Matthew 22: 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

So what Jesus is saying is that love is the motivation for right living. If you love God, you will be obedient and conform to his will. So love is a scent. If you look at them 10 commandments, how it's constructed is based on love because the first four commandments, worship God, do not make false idols, do not misuse the name of God, keep the Sabbath day holy, they are exclusively to love God. And the other five, six, seven, eight, nine, and Ten Commandments basically are loving men who is basically the image of God. Because if you can't say you can't say you love and you hate men because man has made the name and she got so naturally we love God.

So the whole 10 commandments are conformity to God's will in the 10 commandments reflect the underlying basis which is basically love. So let's conclude we have the four beatitudes, blessed are those who are poor, who mourn, they are meek and who hunger righteousness. This is the kind of inward transformation that we must have. And once this happens, then the rest of the beatitudes will come forward, they will be expression of righteousness, which is mercy, pure in heart, peace makers and then as a result they will be persecuted for righteousness sake.

The next beatitude is, blessed are the merciful. So now we are looking at the other beatitudes, which are basically the outworking of the inward transformation that has occurred in the first four beatitudes to righteousness. So blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. Mercy is a compassion for people in need and the difference between mercy and grace, they're both loving responses. One is to misery and helplessness where you show mercy and the other one is an undeserved response to people who do not deserve it. It is grace. So they're similar but there are some differences there. Mercy is a generous attitude, in which we are willing to see things from other people's point of view and is not quick to take offense or to gloat over for that person's shortcomings. It is sharply in contrast with secular views of revenge. The world would rather take revenge rather than to show mercy.

Now, blessed are the merciful because they shall receive mercy. This is not a quid pro quo. This mercy refers to God forgiving them. The person who received mercy will be so transformed by the mercy shown to him by God that he will show the same mercy to other people. It's not the quid pro quo. That's why in Matthew 7:21. Jesus says.

*Matthew 7:21 So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets*

So the issue is insight, like an alcoholic. An alcoholic would never admit to being an alcoholic and will actually hate other alcoholics ironically, but the person who recognize his own helplessness and wretchedness and is actually grateful for whatever mercy has shown to him, he learns to be merciful towards other people.

Let's look at a concept of glory (KAVOD), which is basically weightiness, outward luminosity in terms of God or fame. Now if you look back at Exodus 34, Moses remember wanted to have God show him his glory. God said to him, look you can't see my face and live, your body is not built for that, and then Exodus 34, it said

*Exodus 34: 5 The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. 6 The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,*

So therefore the glory of God is his heaviness, his weightiness, is actually his mercy and in Ephesians chapter two verse 4,

*Ephesians 2: 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved*

So God was merciful, gave us the forgiveness that we did not deserve. So blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. He is inviting us to step into his glory. See the glory of God is his mercy. He's inviting us to be sons of glory. He's inviting us to be like him as glorious as he is by mimicking his mercy.

The pure in heart, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

What is the pure in heart?

Well, pure in heart is basically a person who has got single-minded devotion to God that actually stems from internal cleansing created by Jesus. What you see is what you get, someone who has been transformed. We see the default mode of the heart is described in Matthew 15:18.

*Matthew 15:18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."*

So what Jesus is arguing with the Pharisees, the Pharisees were more focused on what you're supposed to eat and not eat that actually makes you unclean or impure before God, and Jesus is saying, look you're focusing on the form and not the substance. Substances is what actually comes out of your heart, out of your mouth is actually far more evil and so therefore, being pure in heart is not like the Pharisees, it is not being hypocritical or double dealing. A pure heart raises up the contrast against those who are not pure, and external and ceremonial. Those who exhibit a type righteousness and purity, by their deeds and observances to ceremonies and laws, but in word, in their attitudes and hearts, they're cold and hard and unchanged. And this Jesus described them in Luke 11:39.

*And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness*

So what we are is outside we look good. We dress well, we speak well, but inside is all the false motives. Matthew 23:25

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.*

Go to any cemetery, it looks white outside, but what's inside is far more dirty. Psalm 24,

*Psalm 24: 3 Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. 5 He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah*

So this is the picture and it's in stark contrast to what we see in the world, whether it is office politics or anyway we work being pure in heart is an internal integrity that manifests itself outside. So our actions need to correspond with our motives. What do you think about every day? What do you daydream about every day? What do you love? What do you want more than anything in the world? 1-John 3:2

*Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

So we must have a single hope. If our single hope is to reflect, to be like God, then with this hope within us, we will actually start to conform to God's will and start to live a righteous life. So blessed are those who are pure in heart.

So now we come to the peacemakers. So the next beatitude is. **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.** So next is a very nice animation from the Bible project that actually explains the nature of peace very well. The concept of peace is taken from the Hebrew word Shalom, which is actually a lot more than just the absence of violence. So let's watch this tape before we continue.

People can talk about peace treaties or times of peace. It means the absence of war and in the Bible, the word peace can refer to the absence of conflict, but it also points to the presence of something better in its place. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for peace is Shalom. And in the New Testament, the Greek word is Eirena. The most basic meaning of Shalom is complete or whole. The word can refer to a stone that has a perfect whole shape with no cracks. It can also refer to a completed stone wall that has no gaps and no missing bricks. Shalom refers to something that's complex with lots of pieces. That's in a state of completeness, wholeness. It's like Job who says his tensor in a state of Shalom because he counted his flock and no animals are missing. This is why Shalom can refer to a person's wellbeing. Like when David visited his brothers on the battle field, he asked about their Shalom. The core idea is that life is complex, full of moving parts and relationships and situations and when any of these is out of alignment or missing, your Shalom breaks down. Life is no longer whole, it needs to be restored. In fact, that's the basic meaning of Shalom when you use it as a verb. To bring Shalom literally means to make complete or restore.

So Solomon brings Shalom to the unfinished temple when he completes it, or if your animal accidentally damages your neighbor's field, you Shalom them by giving them a complete repayment for their loss. You take what's missing and you restore it to wholeness. The same goes for human relationships. In the book of Proverbs to reconcile and heal a broken relationship is to bring Shalom. And when rival kingdoms make Shalom in the Bible, it doesn't just mean they stop fighting. It also means they start working together for each other's benefit. This state of Shalom is what Israel's Kings were supposed to cultivate and it rarely happened. So the prophet Isaiah, he looked for to a future King, a Prince of Shalom and his reign would bring Shalom with no end. A time when God would make a covenant of Shalom with his people and make right all wrongs and heal all that has been broken. This is why Jesus's birth in the New Testament was announced as the arrival of Eirena. Remember that's the Greek word for peace. Jesus came to offer his peace to others, like when he said to his followers, my peace I give to you all. The apostles claimed that Jesus made peace between messed up humans and God when he died and Rose from the dead. The idea is that he restored to wholeness the broken relationship between humans and their creator. This is why the

*apostle Paul can say Jesus himself is our Eirena. He was the whole complete human that I made to be, but have failed. And now he gives me his life as a gift. And this means that Jesus's followers are now called to create peace.*

*Paul instructed local churches to keep their unity through the bond of peace, which requires humility and patience and bearing with others in love. Becoming people of peace means participating in the life of Jesus who reconciled all things in heaven on earth, restoring peace through his death and resurrection. So peace takes a lot of work because it's not just the absence of conflict. True peace requires taking what is broken and restoring it to wholeness, whether it's in our lives, our relationships or in our world. And that's the rich biblical concept of peace.*

So there we have the concept of Shalom, which is wholeness, translated as peace. We are called to be peacemakers, but there are a lot of misconceptions of what peace or a peacemaker is, let's dispel these conceptions. First of all, peace is not just the absence of conflict, so the peace in the Bible is never to be confused with pacifism. Peace is not just avoidance of strife. We're not instructed to run away from conflict or put our heads in the sand, hoping that conflict will end, and this will only delay the inevitable. It is not appeasement of parties. This is the idea of the peace at any price. Mentality is far from biblical commands. You can never make everybody happy all the time. Neither is peace just an accommodation of issues, the person who glosses over the problem acting as if everything's all right when it's actually not, is not a peacemaker.

So, what is a peacemaker? Well, what did Jesus mean by being a peacemaker? A working definition of a peacemaker is someone who actively seeking to reconcile people to God and to one another. It's important to understand that peace in the Bible is always based on justice and righteousness, where justice prevails and righteousness rules there you will have peace, but without these two virtues lasting peace is not possible.

Peace making is a divine work. God is the author of peace. Jesus is the Supreme peace maker. Look at John 20:19 when Jesus came back after resurrection

*John 20: 19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."*

So our mission is peace because peace is one and paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross and we are asked to bring peace to the world. And peace involves hard work initiative, persistence, we are the people who produce right relationships in every sphere of life. However, it's not easy. Romans 12:18 says

*If it is possible so far as it depends on you live peaceably with all.*

There are so many troublemakers in the world, but sometimes it is not possible to make peace all the time. We have to leave it to God. Well here are some steps which we can take to bring about peace or peacemaking. First of all, we need to talk to God as crucial because he's the one that actually searches our hearts and sometimes, well, you know, when we think the fault is with the other person, often it is our own fault. So we need to talk to God and have him search our hearts. Number two, we have to take the first step. Remember Matthew 5:23-24 says,

*If you're offering your gift on the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in the front of altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother and then come and offer your gift.*

This I believe is probably one of the most ignored verses in the Bible. So take the first step. Peacemakers will always need to take the first step. Communicate with the person, tell him how you feel, some of the grudges that are there, the ill feelings. Proverbs 15:1 writes a gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath. Paul wrote also, no rotten talk should come from your mouth only what is good for the building out of someone in need in order to give grace to those who hear it. Ephesians 4:29.

The other step is stop gossiping. Nothing disqualifies us from being peacemakers by talking about other people rather than talking to them. So hopefully finally by the Holy Spirit, peace would have started just going along these four simple steps.

Lastly, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.

If you're called child of God, you're just merely part of the family. When you call it sons of God, sons of Gods are ones who carry the family name, bear the family resemblance and character reputation and the family mission. So it's a very high privilege when we become peacemakers, just like Jesus who went to cross to win the basis of peace of Shalom of making relationships whole with man, with man and man with God. Nothing can be more important.

I trust that the Holy Spirit will guide all of us to learn to be peacemakers.