

Starving for Righteousness Անօթի ու Ծարաւ Արդարութեան

Psalms 42:1-5

John 4:10-15

Longing for something, food, water, air, friendship ... these are strong desires in us. A young man looks for God and cannot find Him. He asks a wise man if he can help him find God. This old wise man takes this young boy to a river and forces his head in the water. The young man cannot breathe. After a few seconds the man takes the boy's head from the water and then repeats this. This young man becomes very angry. In his anger, he asks the wise man, "Why you are doing this to me?" The wise man says, "It is simple. What were you seeking when your head was in the water?" The young man says, "Of course, oxygen to breathe". The wise man says: "Go and seek God with that same longing, and you can find Him..."

We arrived to the fourth beatitude:

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

To hunger and thirst are strong verbs. People are usually restless looking for something to satisfy their hunger and thirst. The restlessness and the longing that we all have are universal traits of the human heart. The Bible puts it this way, **"God has put eternity into man's heart"** (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We have this vacuum but unfortunately we keep trying to fill it with many other "temporary" things. Look around you and you will see people doing all sorts of things to fill this hunger.

St. Augustine said: **"Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it rest in Thee."**

What is the thing that you are looking for to fill your restless heart? How do you fill the vacuum that you have?

Jeremiah has a clear message from God to the Israelites:

For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2:13 ESV)

How much water can one fill in a broken cistern?

I will ask the same question, how long are you going to fill your thirst with temporary fixes? Even if you come to church, sing in the choir, or serve in the church and you do not enter His kingdom with a longing for God, everything else is just a short-run, temporary fix.

In his book, Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis writes:

“The Christian says, 'Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or to be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage.’¹

As the deer desires for water, the Samaritan asked for water that would really satisfy her, what is your desire this morning? What are you longing for?

What did Jesus mean when he said?

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6 ESV)

Righteousness is a key word in the Sermon on the Mount. **Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...**

In the Bible, righteousness appears in different contexts:

- God is righteous (Zephaniah 3:5; Daniel 9:7,14; Isaiah 45:21).
- The Word of God is righteous (Isaiah 45:19; Deut. 4:8; Romans 7:12)
- God found the universe and his kingdom on righteousness (Psalm 89:14)
- God loves righteousness (Psalm 33:5)
- God rewards righteousness (Matthew 6:4,6,18)
- Noah was a righteous man (Gen 6:9)
- Abraham was a righteous man (Gen 15:6)
- God will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31; Eccl. 3:17; Psalm 9:8)
- He (God) leads me in the paths of righteousness (Psalm 23)
 - **What is righteousness?**
 - **It is a relationship and lifestyle;**
 - **That means it is a position and practice.**

For the Israelites, to become righteous was something one had to do. In other words, “do right things.” Jesus said:

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (5:20).

What? How can anyone have more righteousness than the scribes and the Pharisees? Those people keep the law; they are the guardians of the law. No one can exceed them in human terms. Only God grants us righteousness through His Son Jesus Christ.

What does it mean?

A. Being right with God (relationship)

God is interested in relationships. He loves His creation, and He wants His broken creation to come back, repent and restore the relationship. The message of the cross and resurrection is the restoration of this relationship. Jesus is interested in **relationships**. Thus, Righteousness means to have the **right** relationship with God, with ourselves, and with the community (the other).

Bruce Waltke, in his OT Theology says, **“righteousness is the bringing about of right and harmony for all in the community and to the physical and spiritual**

realms.” Waltke adds that righteousness is the act of serving the community over oneself.

“So, when we come to this Beatitude, what Jesus is blessing those who hunger and thirst **for relational integrity** and **relational wholeness**, relating to each other on the basis of honesty and integrity, mercy and love.”²

B. Living Right.

That means it is position and practice.

Please let us see how Jesus understood those relationships:

In chapter five, Jesus gives six examples about having the ***right relationships***:

1. Do not kill, but seek peace. Even leave the worship service and make it a priority to make peace:

“leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (21-26)

2. Humans are not created to be instruments of sexual lust; they are created in God’s image. The bottom line is to look at each other as valuable a creation of God made for a relationship and not immediate lustful fixes.... (27-30)

3. Marriage is a relationship. God united humans in marriage. Divorce is not a good option. There are more details why God allowed divorce in the OT. We will not elaborate in detail here.

4. Keeping an oath. Words should be meaningful:

“Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.” (33-37)

5. Doing good always is better than evil and revenge (turn the other cheek) (38-42)

6. Loving your enemy and praying for the ones who persecute you...(43-48)

John Piper adds:

So it is pretty clear what Jesus meant back in 5:20 when he said that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. **It has to do with showing mercy, and being radically pure in your heart, and making peace instead of retaliating.** ³

We can fall in the trap of self-righteousness. The Scribes and Pharisees thought righteousness was all about keeping the rules and regulations and forgetting relationships. One can be “righteous” outside, and inside, the heart is not in right relation with God. Sermon on the Mount is a good sermon to examine our hearts, attitudes when it comes our relations with God and others.

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.
(Matthew 6:1 ESV)

Application

Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman is good example to end my sermon.

We all need “water” to satisfy our hunger and we need a “bucket” to get the water. Our daily life is busy in providing “water” for our bodies. That is important yet not enough to find inner completion, satisfaction.

1. Spend time with God in feeding yourself with His Word. May God’s Spirit renew you everyday to face the world?

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” (Ps. 42:1-2)

“I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.” (Ps. 143:6)

2. In your search for “water and bread” that Jesus gives, see that you are searching His righteousness. How are you in your relationships with God, yourself

and others? In my sermon I gave 6 examples of what Jesus taught about having right-relationships. Examine yourself and bring your issues to God. Maybe you need to take some actions in those areas.

3. Pharisees and Scribes were fallen in the trap of outer righteousness (self-righteousness), legalities and not **Heart Transformation**. Come poor, empty, in repentance to seek healing from God daily.

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-15)

1. <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/462154-the-christian-says-creatures-are-not-born-with-desires-unless>
2. Shawn Reese, *The Blessed Righteousness*, PBCC
3. John Piper, *Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness*, FEBRUARY 16, 1986

As the deer panteth for the water
So my soul longeth after Thee
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship Thee

Ինչպէս եղջերուն ջուրի կը փափաքի
Նոյնպէս անձս Քեզի:
Միայն Դուն իմ սրտիս փափաքն ես
Եւ կ'անձկամ, Տէր, Քեզ պաշտել:

Chorus

You alone are my strength my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield

You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship Thee

Միայն Դուն իմ զօրութիւնն ես
Միայն քեզի իմ հոգիս կ'երգէ:
Միայն Դուն իմ սրտիս փափաքն ես
Եւ կ'անձկամ, Տէր, Քեզ պաշտել: