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Being The Hands of Jesus . . .

In Our Hungering & Thirsting For Righteousness

MATTHEW 5:6

Introduction

1. We use our hands for so many things: to hold, lift, support, carry, push, guide, assist, comfort, to point or direct.
2. As we think about being the hands of Jesus, so many of these actions come into play.
3. Something which you and I take for granted is the use of our hands to feed ourselves.
4. As an infant our fine motor skills are not developed to the point that we can feed ourselves.
5. We are totally dependent upon someone else to do that for us.
6. Babies are quick to let us know when they are hungry or thirsty.
7. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' fourth statement to His disciples and the crowds was this, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6).
8. Hunger and thirst are two of the great driving forces in our lives.
9. Our mind will not let us rest until we have satisfied these essential needs of our physical body.
10. Today, as we think more about being the hands of Jesus, I would like for us to look more closely at this statement of our Lord and consider the following:
 - a. What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness?
 - b. What is the righteousness of which Jesus speaks?

- c. In what way will we be satisfied?

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I. Hungering and Thirsting For Righteousness

A. GOD HAS SET ETERNITY INTO OUR HEARTS

1. In Ecclesiastes 3:11, a very wise man, known as Solomon, wrote “He [God] has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.”
2. God has put “eternity into [our] hearts.” What does this mean?
3. It means we have an insatiable desire, an inconsolable longing to know about that which is beyond us.

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B. SUBSTITUTES WILL NOT SATISFY

1. Have you ever had a time when you were hungry or thirsty for something specific, and someone offered you something else.
2. It just didn’t satisfy, because it wasn’t what you wanted or needed at the time.
3. More than 700 years before Jesus spoke these words, the prophet Isaiah chastised God’s people for chasing after substitutes (Isaiah 55:2-3a).

“Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live.” (Isaiah 55:2–3a, NASB95)

4. About 100 years after Isaiah, God sent another prophet to the people in Jerusalem.

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5. His name was Jeremiah, and he had a similar message (Jeremiah 2:12-13):

“Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate,” declares the Lord. “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” **(Jeremiah 2:12–13, NASB95)**
6. In both cases, God’s people had turned away from Him, seeking to find satisfaction in other places and things.
7. We are no different today. God has put eternity in our hearts, and we have this insatiable desire which we try to fill with everything else.
8. We spend our money on things which do not satisfy, we drink from broken cisterns which can hold no water.
9. We try to satisfy ourselves with money, power, illicit sex, vacations, sports, all kinds of outdoor activities, accomplishments, drugs, entertainment, etc.
10. And yet, when all is said and done, we find ourselves with a deeper sense of need, a greater longing for satisfaction, because ultimately, these do not satisfy.
11. C. S. Lewis, the British writer and theologian, once said, *“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.”*
12. The ancient philosopher, Augustine of Hippo, knew the answer. He once wrote of God, *“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”*

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II. Righteousness

A. WHAT IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH SATISFIES?

1. As we noted earlier, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

2. But what is the righteousness which Jesus promises will satisfy?
3. Jesus used the word "righteousness" five times in His Sermon on the Mount:
 - a. Here in Matthew 5:6.
 - b. Four verses later, in Matthew 5:10, where He said, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 - c. In Matthew 5:20 — ". . . unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."
 - d. Matthew 6:1 — "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.
 - e. Matthew 6:33 — "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
4. When we put all of this together, I think the righteousness for which we are to hunger and thirst includes at least three things:
 - a. Those acts of compassion for which our Lord was known (Job 29:14-16; 1 John 3:7)

"I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I investigated the case which I did not know." (Job 29:14–16, NASB95)

"Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;" (1 John 3:7, NASB95)
 - 1) However, as Jesus pointed out in Matthew 5:20, our righteousness

must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (i.e., Pharisee praying in the temple, Matthew 18:11-12).

“God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.” (Luke 18:11–12, NASB95)

2) We are not to practice our righteousness to be noticed by others (Matthew 6:1).

a. “So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogue and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men” (Matthew 6:2).

b. “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men” (Matthew 6:5).

b. It is a righteousness which brings peace, quietness and confidence (assurance, NKJV) into our lives (Isaiah 32:17-18).

1) “And the work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever. Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation, and in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places;” (Isaiah 32:17–18, NASB95)

2) We sing of such righteousness every time we sing,

**Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.**

c. Ultimately, it is the righteousness of God which He imparts to us (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NASB95)

“and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24, NASB95)

- 1) When this righteousness is ours, it doesn't matter what Satan, the accuser, may say against us.
- 2) God declares us to be righteous.

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B. WE MUST HUNGER AND THIRST FOR IT

1. I imagine that few of us have truly hungered and thirsted in our lives.
2. If we leave home on a trip and forget to take something with us to drink or eat along the way, we know that a convenience market is no more than 10-15 minutes down the road.
3. Kenneth Bailey, in his book, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, tells of a time when he and a group of friends traveled deep into the Sahara Desert by camel.
 - a. The temperature soared to above 110° F. in the shade, but, according to him, there was no shade.
 - b. On their way, one of the goat-skin water bags leaked all of its water.
 - c. They eventually ran out of water and were still a day and a half from their destination, a well named Bir Shaytoun, located deep in the desert.
 - d. Mr. Bailey said that during this time his mouth became completely dry.
 - e. It was impossible for him to eat. Any attempt to do so felt like “the rubbing of two pieces of sandpaper together.”
 - f. His vision became blurred and the struggle to keep moving became harder with each step.
4. The people of Jesus' day knew what it was like to “hunger and thirst” after food and water.

5. They understood what Jesus meant about an “all-consuming passion for righteousness.”

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III. “They Shall Be Satisfied”

A. SATISFIED BY THOSE AROUND THEM? NO.

1. Many seem to understand the righteousness of which Jesus speaks as the keeping of a specific set of standards.
2. This was the attitude of the Pharisee in the temple, “I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get” (Matthew 18:12).
3. Even Paul, prior to his salvation, followed a similar way of life — “as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless” (Philippians 3:6).
4. Such an individual may even live a personally admirable lifestyle.
5. They will find themselves respected and admired in their community.
6. However, the attitudes of the community can change and such a person may find himself or herself out of favor with those same people.

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B. SATISFIED BY GOD

1. Ultimately, God is the One who will satisfy.
2. The righteousness which Jesus describes is a relationship granted as a gift of God.
3. It brings with it the peace of God which “surpasses all comprehension” and guards our hearts and minds “in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).
4. It alone satisfies the insatiable desire which God has placed within us.

Conclusion

1. For those of us who are Christians, let's be the hands of Jesus by pointing and guiding others to this righteousness of which Jesus speaks.
2. You and I can make the lives of those around us and ultimately this community better if we will do that.
3. However, we must not forget. We cannot lead others to a place where we have not gone ourselves.
4. Do you hunger and thirst for this righteousness of which Jesus spoke?
5. Are you seeking first God's kingdom and His righteousness?
6. If not, you will never reach a point in life where you are truly satisfied, because eternity beckons in your heart.

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7. Today, if you find in yourself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, realize that you were made for another world.
8. Only Christ can give you the righteousness which will satisfy your soul both now and into eternity.
9. Will you come to Him today?