

Blessed Character
Matthew 5:1-10
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January 28, 2024

Clearly all of you know that song. I don't. Till now, you may think - Where have you been? I've been in other churches. I promise. Great music. Thank you so much for singing heartily along. Like that song is new to me, you may be new to this church. If you are we are so glad to have you here. You've walked into a series on scenes through a Life of Christ and we will be looking at Jesus teaching from the Gospel of Matthew in just a moment. Let's pray together that the Lord would speak to us in His Word as well as song.

Thank you, Lord, for your word and the way it penetrates our hearts; the way it encourages, rebukes, corrects and trains us the way in which it brings us closer to you and to your grace. And I pray that whether the person hearing your words read today is 7 or 27 or 47 or 77, that we would all have the sense that we've heard even from you as you read your word. We pray it in your name, Amen.

It is my privilege to say, kids, you're welcome to stay if you like. But if it's your age group that has church downstairs, go on down. And while you watch your kids leave, you could also all find your seats. Sit down, if you will. While you're doing that, I notice are more people up in the balcony today than usual. Nice to see you balcony, people. I'll try to make eye contact with you, but I just want to know one thing. There are seats down front. And if you want eye contact with me, then you can sit in these rows up front. I'm looking at you and you in the green shirt. I see you. You knew I was looking at you. Maybe I'll see you next week down here. What are the chances? Is there a chance of that? There is a chance of that. Okay. That's terrific.

All right. I want to read God's Word to you. The life of Jesus is our theme but we're not going to do the whole Sermon on Mount right now. Maybe later on but right now, we're just going to survey big events from the life of Jesus. We're going to have a couple Sundays from the teaching of Jesus. Then we'll get to his miracles shortly. But I want to read to you his first utterance when he's teaching his disciples from Matthew 5:

Seeing the crowds, he (that's Jesus) went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him and he opened his mouth and he taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart. For they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you for righteousness sake.

Let's pray together for a moment one more time. Heavenly Father, give us ears to hear all that you're saying to us in your Word, and we ask it in your name. Amen. But ask you if you would just pause for one second before the sermon proper starts.

If you have a bulletin in your hand or just want to think for a minute, think of a character trait that you wish you had or personality trait you wish you had, or if you're happy with your character, one that you

wish maybe your friends, roommate spouse, child, grandchild, neighbor, cousin had -- a trait you admire. For a long time in the ancient world, in Jesus day, the Greeks and the Romans had a list of virtues they called the classical virtues which were *courage, wisdom, endurance, temperance* and *justice*. These were thought to be the most important character traits a person could have. But then, the church came along and gave us the *fruit of the spirit*. Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Then we would add things like endurance and, you know, strength. In the Bible, we've got our list. Then, there's lists around today that if you ask people what you wish you would have in a friend or a spouse, they would maybe say things like a lot of energy, well-educated confidence, self-expressive, maybe even good at partying or making people laugh. Strong, resilient and things like that.

Now you go through lists of that nature and then you compare it to the list we have in the Sermon on the Mount and you realize that the Sermon on the Mount is very different from ordinary lists of virtues. I mean, who here, even on a Sunday morning, said to yourself, you know, something like, Lord, I want to be more meek. I want to learn how to mourn better. I want to be more poor in spirit. These are not things we pursue even when we're Christians, even if we're going to church, even when we're maybe even aware that we're going to be in the Gospel of Matthew here in Jesus' teaching. So, we have to understand this is no ordinary virtue list. In fact, the core of the list (and we'll really just look at the verse 4 here today) is *blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness* and then the first three lead to that. The heart of a disciple is to be hungry and thirsty for righteousness. And if you're poor in spirit, you know you're spiritual poverty, you know your sinfulness, then as a result of knowing your spiritual poverty, you will then mourn. You mourn over your sin. And if you mourn over your sin, then in due course you will also be meek. That is to say, if you know you're a sinner and you're not strong or great in God's sight, you're not going to be self-assertive, self-promoting demand, and in your own way you'll be meek and take all those together -- poor of spirit, mourning over your sin, deep awareness of your sin. You have no right to assert yourself. Then you're going to want to do better and you're going to seek that from God, of course, and that's called by Jesus *a hunger and a thirst for righteousness*. Now, Jesus says this at a particular moment in his ministry.

Just want to remind you that in the last few weeks we looked at the baptism of Jesus, which he received from John the Baptist, to fulfill all righteousness. And at that time the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove. And the Father said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I'm well pleased - he's ready to launch his ministry. But first he had to be tested. And so the spirit led him into the wilderness to be tested or tempted by the evil one and he passed all the tests where Adam and Eve failed. He passed where we fail, where the Israelites failed. He passed and he was ready to go. And then he performed some miracles as well and called disciples. And the miracles we'll look at a little bit later in a couple of weeks. But those miracles are mentioned earlier and then described in detail later Matthew 8-9. But Jesus was performing miracles. So, crowds came to him. He's a prophet, he's a healer, and huge crowds are coming around him. And he doesn't just want crowds, he wants disciples. And so it says in chapter 5:1 it says that he saw the crowds and called his disciples to himself on the mountain. And he sat down to teach them. Now I have a hard time resisting saying this. In fact, I'm not going to resist saying it. In the ancient world the teacher sat down and everybody else stood up. 😊 I just want you to know that. And you don't have to do it. But now you know it. That's the way it was in those days. To sit down is to take a position of authority. So, Jesus calls his disciples and he starts talking about blessedness. Now, if you've been around church you know, that blessed essentially means happy or even carefree, blessed, happy, carefree are those who have these traits.

But then when we look at the traits, we think, Well, this is an odd list. Happy are those who mourn. It's almost like saying happy are those who cry happy or those who are sad. What is Jesus driving at here? And again, the point is this is not an ordinary happiness in our culture today. People often or generally pursue happiness through means like good entertainment or good food, comfortable clothes. So, Jesus is giving an agenda that's a little bit at odds with our cultural agenda. He's saying, Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn. He's talking about character, about something that endures when all is against you. You can still remain blessed or happy because you're not dependent on ephemeral or fleeting things. Let's dig in a tiny bit.

***How do you go about being happy? How do you seek pleasure? Well, again, you might look for a great restaurant or a movie or a funny comedy, or you might even go over to an amusement park. Now, amusement parks are an interesting thing because to be honest, I don't find them very amusing. In fact, I find them depressing because we go to amusement parks with our children after school is out and it's 90 degrees and it's 90% humidity and we stand in lines for 90 minutes to be in a ride for 90 seconds. Your hearts in your throat. My wife says, Why would I want to pay to be in a car wreck? That's her view of amusement parks. And the truth of matter is, amusement is one of those things we actually find kind of like friendship, looking for something else. If you say to yourself, I'm going to go find a friend, that's probably not the way to find a friend... Join a group, join a team, get on some service project, do something to meet people, then you make friends. Same thing with happiness and blessedness, because we all know if you live for pleasure, it's fleeting. We all know that physical pleasures are transitory. By the time you can really afford great food, we know what's bad for us. We know we have heart problems or, I don't know, we eat way too much, whatever it might be, don't live for food. If you find happiness in your physical strength, it will fade. If you find it in beauty, that also will fade. Godly character is inalienable. Age doesn't take it away from you.

Many years ago, I was getting a haircut at a haircutting place and I was waiting a little longer than usual so I picked up a People magazine. It's a matter of principle that I have that I should look at People magazine once every decade and this was my opportunity. And I picked it up and I just started flipping through and there is this actress model and she's being interviewed so I began to read about her. And she said, you know, if I weren't so beautiful, maybe I would have more character. And I thought, that's an oddly perceptive thing to say. And that was 30 years ago. And she's had lots of time to work on character because no matter how well the Lord preserves you as you age, she's not as beautiful as she was when she was 27. And so physical beauty and physical strength and every pleasure of this life has a tendency to fade on us.

Even if we were only calculating, we should look for character and for abiding traits. And that's what the Lord gives us in his work. Now, these traits are not a set of isolated capacities or characteristics, or certainly not personality. This is what Jesus says. Blessed are the poor in spirit. He does not mean I bless people who can hardly stand up and talk for themselves. He does not mean when he says blessed to meek-- Blessed are the pushovers who don't know how to defend their rights and allow people to crush them. That's not what he means. It's not about a style. It's about character. It's about not at the not the traits off to the side, just your way of moving your hands or the way you walk or the way you talk. It's about what's in your heart. Is discussing here. They are kingdom traits the king is addressing us is telling us not just what we should be like, but actually he's telling us what he is like. That is to say the Beatitudes are first and foremost a list of traits that describe Jesus.

Now in the middle, the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus was accused of being evil by some people, and the disciples were shocked because Jesus is so clearly good. And he said, let me explain this to you. He said, what happened to me? These false accusations? They're coming your way, too, because these are then his words from Matthew 10. *A student is not above his teacher and a servant is not above his master.* It is enough. It is more than enough, I would say, for the student, that's you and me or the disciples. It's enough for the student to be like his teacher. That's Jesus and for the servant to be like the master. What he's saying is what happens to me happens to you because you're like me. And if people are hostile toward me, they will be hostile to you.

What Jesus is saying here is that his life is a pattern for ours. Now, if you look at the Beatitudes and pause and think about them a bit, you will quickly see that all but one of them describe Jesus, for example. Blessed are those who mourn. Jesus knew how to mourn. He said, I see all Israel like sheep without a shepherd harassing and helpless.

He mourned over the condition of Israel at the end of his life, when most of the people of Israel had rejected him, he mourned, he wept over the grief that was going to come to Israel because they'd rebelled against God, rebelled against him. They're going to rebel against Rome and be crushed. Jesus wept over them. Jesus mourned.

Jesus was meek, you may say. Well, he's pretty potent. Yes, potent as a person, but meek, meaning he did not assert himself, assert his own rights. He wasn't harsh or cruel or demanding. He said, my yoke is easy, my burden is light. I'm meek among you. Jesus didn't assert himself.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Why was Jesus baptized by John the Baptist? Did he need to repent of his sins? Did you have them washed away? Of course not, he said. I'm doing this to fulfill all righteousness. So it's clear that I stand with all the people seeking righteousness. I don't personally need it, but I will stand by my people. Blessed are the merciful, says Jesus was merciful. If you ask the question, Why did Jesus heal people? The answer is because he was merciful. In fact, if you read through the Gospels, you will find that on a number of occasions people walk up to Jesus blind or mute—someone speaking for them, and they say, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on us. And Jesus says, Mercy on them. So we can be, we can and should be merciful too.

Blessed are the peacemakers. How many times that Jesus heals somebody, forgive somebody and say, Go in peace. So every trait of Jesus is a trait that we can pursue that the Lord wants us to pursue and have by His grace. Now, this is a marvelous thing. Who would dare to say my goal in life is to be a whole lot like Jesus. What ordinary person would say publicly that's my aspiration. You're vain person. Who do you think you are going to be like Jesus and the answer is yes, because that's what he said. He gave me the privilege of seeking a life that is more like his. That's what we see in the Beatitudes. Taking them as a whole now, of course, is one beatitude that Jesus did not endorse regarding himself, and that is Jesus never said he's poor in spirit. That's because to be poor in spirit is to be sinful. To be aware of your sin, and your full need of God's grace, God's mercy, the forgiving mercy of God. Of course, Jesus needs the mercy of God. The Holy Spirit empowered Him for ministry and comforted him, but He never had to repent of his sins because he's perfect. He's sinless. And so we would say that in this one we remember the distance, and that is Jesus and we are as like as possible, except this one hole. And Jesus bridges the gap between our sinfulness and his righteousness. We're clothed in His righteousness, as the Bible says. But that means then just to not No, make a simple point about it is those WWJD bracelets that were so popular years ago and then everybody made fun of them because 15 year old girls were wearing them.

All the people that made fun of those 15-year-old girls are wrong and the girls are right. It's a good question to ask What would Jesus do? What is Jesus like? And take your cue from that. Okay, so let's aspire. May I say let us aspire to be as much like Jesus as we can. By God's grace. By God's grace, He atone for our sins so we can aim for it by God's grace, He's going to complete his work by changing our hearts, by renewing us, by God's grace, He'll show us our sin so we can repent, and we can aim for that. Now that grace that I'm saying holds the Beatitudes together, we are poor in spirit. We're sinners. We mourn over it, we're meek. We don't assert ourselves because we know how sinful we are and how we don't have a right to demand our way. And as a consequence, we're going to have a hunger and thirst for the righteousness that God gives us and works out in us. So, let's take a look at some of them, just a little more detail.

Let's look at poor in spirit. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Again, this is not Jesus saying I endorse people who are cowards or nervous or can't ever get a word out of their mouths. It's not about personal style. It's a self-acknowledged weakness. The weakness that is caused by sin, however strong your personality may be, however visceral or forceful you are, you can be poor in spirit if you know and acknowledge your sinfulness.

Now, this again, is a countercultural value in our culture. We're all full of admiration of strong, self-reliant, self-made people. We admire, for example, a businessman who didn't inherit his business from his family, but who did it himself and built it from nothing. And when we look at children, of course, this doesn't quite apply as much as it did a few years ago. But when we look at children trying to master skills that demand physical or manual dexterity, we notice things like maybe a little child that's a six year old who's now tired of the Velcro shoes and they want to learn how to tie their shoelace. And, you know, little fingers, especially for boys, just don't always do what you want them to do. And so they're going to tie their shoes and they're full of resolve and happiness. And then they try and they fail. And it's just not that easy for a little child to tie a shoelace. The strings don't work right. It's mildly complicated. And the boy gets more and more distraught and frustrated. And dad's watching. Mom's watching as this little child getting close to tears, maybe getting ready to explode in frustration. And you lean over and say, Honey, can I do that for you? The child looks up and says, No, daddy, I can do it myself. And we say, That's my boy. I'm going to call his grandparents and tell them he can do it himself. Well, you know, it's a great attitude when you're six. I'm not speaking against seven-year-old boys that have strong resolution.

But before God, an adult certainly has to say and a teenager certainly has to say, I can't do it myself. I'm not strong enough to save myself, to justify myself. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. That is to say, God gives it to us and we enjoy it. Even now, many of the Beatitudes, most of the Beatitudes ends with a "shall be."

Those who mourn *shall be* comforted. But this one says, Now you are a child of the king. Well, so with the second one, blessed are those who mourn. We already said that blessed those who mourn feels a little bit contradictory, or at least like a tension. Happy are those who are sad. And we think to ourselves, well, I mean, you know, not everybody who's sad is sad in a blessed way. That's correct. You've got to be sad about the right things. So, there's nothing blessed about a criminal being sad he was caught or a corrupt politician or a corrupt business person being caught -- just sorry they're caught. Sorry they're going to jail. The blessed mourning is a mourning over, first of all, personal sin. We need to mourn over our sins, not say, well, that's just the way I am. But we don't just mourn over our own sin. We should also mourn over the sins around us. The people we love and care about. Now, I know you can get angry at the

sins in the lives of people around you, but I'm saying is we also should mourn sin in the lives of people we love and care for. And not only should we mourn sin in the lives of people near us, but we should mourn. There's a place to mourn the sins of society, the brokenness and the sorrow of the world near us. Amos did that. The prophet Amos mourned over the way the rich in Israel trampled the heads of the poor in the dust and denied justice for the oppressed.

We should mourn over injustice, racial, ethnic, economic, political justice in the world today there is injustice, and we should mourn over that. I do a podcast and a year and a half ago, I had as a guest the Disney movie artistic director of the movie *Mulan*, which made \$450 million in its own day. Today's terms would be about \$700 million. That's pretty good. He started on it when he was just under 30 years old and finished it when he was about 33. Massive project, vastly successful, dedicated Christian man, and he was asked to lead a movie that had fairly prominent animism and ancestor worship, and he was willing to put in his dues so he could have his say when the day came because freakishly talented to be leading a half a billion dollar movie at the age of 30 years. And so he noticed that there were all kinds of religious themes presented in Disney movies that tend to be animist or naturalistic or Eastern religions. And he thought, well, you know, I'm loyal, I'm talented, I'm going to get a Christian movie made movie about a hero that's Christian and the boss, the CEO said, No, we can't have that. And he mourned and he decided to leave because he didn't want to give his life to promoting movies about everything but his own faith. And God has blessed him. And he had hardship and he mourned. And the Bible says it's good to mourn -- David in one place as streams of tears flow from my eyes because your law is not obeyed. It's better to weep over sin than to be indifferent and blasé. And James, who of course, is the half-brother of Jesus in his book, which so often echoes the teachings of Jesus, said this... *Wash your hands you sinners and purify your hearts you double minded, grieve, mourn and wail, change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.* It is good to mourn.

Sanctity of Life Sunday was last week - so much better to mourn over the death of the unborn and to say, what can we do to mourn and you'll be comforted. How does God comfort those who mourn? He comforts those who mourn over their own sin by forgiving it. It comforts those who mourn over the sin in the world around us by perhaps moving us to action. He comforts us by the gift of justification, by washing our sins away, by forgiving us, since he also comforts us, by making us better people, by making us more like Christ, by giving us His spirit and awareness of sensitivity, repent. And we try and have some success at living a better life.

Jesus says, Blessed are the meek. Again, it's not a personality trait. Jesus is not blessing people who can't speak up, who can't defend themselves, who have no power within themselves. It's about character. Let me say it a different way. I want you to picture the most frightening, forceful person. You know, a CEO with a booming voice. He's very wealthy, has a powerful personality, massive knowledge, lots of power. And he's the kind of person who just standing there scares some people without even saying a word. When he opens his mouth, he blows people against the back wall. And yet that person can be meek if they use all their power to assert the rights of others instead of asserting themselves. To be meek, it's to say, I don't have any right to demand anything of myself and I'm not pushing anything on you. I want to defend you, defend other people powerfully and still be meek. Blessed are the meek. Just to be really clear, I'm not asking us to be pushovers because we're a created God's image. We all have intrinsic dignity, and we have a right to stand up for ourselves and to stand up for the people around us. We must notice that it's true that people naturally defer to a powerful person and powerful people command and people think, I just need to obey and follow, and powerful people gather followers to themselves. If you

are that kind of a person, be careful you don't use your power for yourself. Use your power for the people around you. Say, Lord, I'm a sinner. I'm in need of your grace. Now, that's one warning. I want to give you another warning.

The second warning is it's very easy to be mourning and meek in our private life of prayer. And we say, Lord, you know, I'm weak and I'm sinful and I have no right to assert myself in any way. And then we're done praying and we're in our family and we're going to say things like, well, you know, you take the garbage out now. You take the garbage out. No, I'm busy. Don't you know how hard I'm working then? And then we go from the prayer to self-assertion in a hurry. It's very easy to pray one way, and it's certainly easy to pray, you know, Lord, I'm a wretched, miserable sinner. And then you go on and somebody wants to tell you about a problem they have with you, and they say, you know, you're wretched, miserable sinner, which is what you just prayed 30 minutes ago and then when you hear from somebody else, you say, you know, you're pretty wretched, miserable sinner yourself.

So let the inside and the outside match up. Let the private in the public match up. That's the way of meekness. And then we inherit the earth. Not now. We may get a taste of that, but if we don't defend ourselves, God says, I'll act for you. You will inherit the universe.

Now, this all leads to the fourth Beatitude, which is blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. That's the core. The last four come out of that. I'll just say a quick word about a couple of the later Beatitudes when it says Blessed the Merciful, that actually flows out of number one, poor in spirit, because you see, if you really know your own sinfulness, your own poverty of spirit, then you will be gentle with others who have poverty of spirit. Right? And you'll be merciful to them. Or to use another example, if you're meek, that is to say, not self-asserting, you'll be a peacemaker because after all, where do most quarrels come from? They come from different people asserting their rights or their view or their perspective and demanding their way. That's all I'm going to say about the last couple of Beatitudes, because I want to focus on a hunger and a thirst for righteousness.

It's the consequence of poverty of spirit and mourning and of meekness. The Bible actually talks about hunger and thirst more than you might guess. For example, in Psalm 107 says, Those who are hungry and thirsty cry to the Lord in their distress. He satisfies them of good things. And Isaiah, 55 says, Come all, you are thirsty, come to the waters, you have no money. Come by and eat and your soul will be delighted. And Jesus says Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever comes to me will never be thirsty. Those are some of the many places where the Bible describes hunger and thirst. But what kind of hunger and thirst? And the answer is a hunger and thirst for God and for His truth and for His word.

Amos, again in one place, says that there is a famine coming in the land of Israel, and it is a famine, not for food or a thirst for water, but a famine for the word of God. He says this because the people in Israel had disregarded God's Word and had refused to heed their profits. So God says, okay, you want to listen to my word, you won't get my word, and then you'll be hungry for my word.

That's the kind of thirst we should have, a thirst for God's truth. So what does it lead to? To hunger and thirst for righteousness, first of all, is the hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Christ. We know our sinfulness, to be clothed in Christ, to be justified by faith, to believe in Him and have our sins washed away, and to have Jesus righteousness imputed to us. That's the first and most important form of hunger and thirst for righteousness. And then the second one is like it, and that is that we live up to our new

nature in Christ, that we actually become more merciful, more pure, more of a peacemaker, more meek. And they call that sanctification, sometimes, becoming a better person. But then also we look not only to ourselves, but we also look to the world, we look for social righteousness. That is to say, we look to ask the question, where can I bring God's light into this world? We don't flee the world. The Bible never permits us to flee this world. Never. We can separate from sinners, but we cannot separate from the world. We're supposed to do our work, fulfill our callings, use our gifts, take care of our neighbors in this world.

So in the world, we seek righteousness. And then we will inherit the earth. It'll be ours. Now, the problem with hearing what Jesus has to say here is that hunger and thirst are dead metaphors in our culture, dead metaphor means a metaphor, an image that at one point had a lot of potency and doesn't anymore. So, hunger is something that's very common in the ancient world because most people eat two meals a day and we're, you know, borderline always most people in danger of being malnourished, not having enough food, being hungry. And that just isn't the case today. As soon as you get a little bit hungry, you know, there are pretzels over here and there's chocolate over there and there's muffins over there. And if you know where to look, there's even bananas around here. There's food everywhere. And if you don't get it here, two miles, three miles in every direction. And, you know, once in a while we get thirsty and there's just water right there. I mean, it's just sitting there. And if it's not there, there is a water fountain over there. If I'm just a little bit thirsty, I can get some water.

In the ancient world. That just wasn't the way it was. I mean, you got 18 inches of water of rain a year. There were a lot of people that were thirsty a lot of the time, and we don't hear it. So I'm going to tell you a story about the time I got really thirsty, I already told you that my family and I hike in the Rockies most years and we have a hike that's probably our favorite hike. It's not one of those giant mountains. It's called Chihuahua Gulch called Gulch Road Pass. I forget exactly what's called, but Chihuahua Gulch is the idea, and it starts at about 10,000 feet and change and it stops around 12,000 something. And it's about a nine-mile, five hours hiking slow. But, you know, it's steep and you have to cross a stream five, six, seven times and, you know, bridges. And it's very steep in places and very nice and places and you walk through a variety of fauna and flora, and we love it. It's medium hard and we know how to do it. It's nine some point something miles. It's 5 hours and we know how much water to take. You want to take about 80 ounces of water and we know it's 80 ounces because we've done it before, because the temperature is usually 55 degrees is a high or maybe 62.

And this one year, a few years ago, the temperatures would be 70 to 75 and partly sunny. We find out we'll be all right. We always have some extra water. But as the day progressed, it wasn't 70, 75, it was 85 plus and blazing full sun. And we knew we were probably not possessed of enough water. And so we're rationing ourselves a bit. And then at one point we said, you know, we're going to run out of water. Why not just drink it now and have less to carry? And then we ran out of water with two miles and change to go, and we decided we're just going to run the last two miles downhill over boulders and so forth. And we got in our car, and it's only a few miles to civilization. But this is not a smooth road. This is not a highway. This is if you're going 18 miles an hour, you're really pushing it. And we finally got to I can't remember, I'm going to say a 7-Eleven. And they had, you know, these two-liter, 67.6 ounce Big Gulps. And we all drank an entire one down in about 90 seconds. And then we noticed it was free refills. So, we had another and on average, I think I think we averaged about 90 to 100 ounces of water just down on the spot because we were thirsty.

I've got to ask you a question. Are you thirsty for the righteousness of Christ? Are you hungry for the ways of God? Are you hungry and thirsty to receive the righteousness of Christ that makes you right with God to become a better person, to look at the sins in your life and not blow them off or brush them off. But to say, I want this, I am hungry for this. We are so often content with a nibble of righteousness, like we nibble a snack, we take a sip of water, let's know that it's good and right. Jesus said, Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty to be closer to God, to be more like Christ, to turn toward him first by the gracious gift of justification and then by the progressive gift He works out in us one by one, and as a church to be more like our Savior, Jesus.

Let's pray together, Father, we ask that the words sink into our hearts -- that we would be hungry and thirsty and that you would satisfy us even now and always just as much looking for your eternal, perfect satisfaction and for real tastes of it even now. Grant us your spirit, wisdom, your courage to do so. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.