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Series: The Sermon on the Mount
Message: The Hungry And Thirsty

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Matthew 5:6

Out of the about 7.4 billion people who live in our world, almost 1 billion of those people go to bed every night hungry. Almost 1 billion face a lack of good clean water in any single day. Some of them, of course, face both of those crises. Thankfully, because of technology and the efforts of a lot of people, those numbers continue to go down, but the truth of the matter is there are still a lot of hungry and thirsty people in our world every day. When Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness", I'm pretty sure He had an audience that perked up and listened to what he had to say. It was Augustine who was maybe reflecting somewhat on those words from our Lord and said, "You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You." So let's look at this fourth beatitude this morning in Matthew's Gospel and see that to those whose greatest passion in life is to please God, God's promise to us is that He will give us the greatest possible satisfaction. It is a wonderful statement that our Lord gives to us.

A very quick review for those of you that have not been with us in the Beatitudes and those of you that have, we've noted a number of things about the Beatitudes. First of all, we've noted that they're often misunderstood. The Beatitudes are often misunderstood. One of the reasons they're misunderstood is they are paradoxical in their focus. Jesus puts before us things that just don't make sense to us in terms of how we often look at the world. We don't think of meek people inheriting anything but maybe tracks on their back as they get run over. When Jesus says these things to us, they're easily misunderstood because when we look at things as we often do from our human viewpoint, they just don't add up and so they are often misunderstood.

Secondly, people don't realize these truths are grounded in the grace of God. They're grounded in the grace of God. We don't approach the Beatitudes as we said from the very beginning as somehow Jesus giving us a path to heaven. We don't do

these things with the hope of gaining eternal life. Jesus is not setting forward in the Beatitudes, as some have mistakenly believed, a way of salvation. Do these things and you'll get there. These are instructions are to His followers, to His disciples, to those who are trying their best to be Christ-followers. When we understand from that vantage point, we realize that what Jesus says to us in all of these statements is they're grounded in His grace. It is His grace that meets us and enables us to be poor in spirit. It is grace that enables us and equips us to mourn over sin. It is grace that enables us to be meek and exercise strength and power under control when we would much rather respond in a totally different way. So they're grounded in grace.

Finally, we've noted that they follow a logical sequence. They follow a logical sequence. In other words, you can't get to number four until you've gone through 1, 2 and 3. We are at number four this morning, but we've already seen what it means to be poor in spirit, to be those who mourn over sin, who are meek, and now we are ready to be hungry and thirsty. So let's do that.

Let's look at the spiritually famished and we're going to start off by looking at what Jesus does which He so often does in His teaching. He so often takes you into the physical realm to teach lessons that He wants us to get spiritually. Before we even look further in the outline, would you notice that you have this double imagery. He says blessed are those who hunger and thirst. It's almost like He wants us to understand the impact and the gravity and the strength with which He wants us to see this. He could have just as easily said you're blessed if you hunger after righteousness. He could have said you want to be thirsty after righteousness. Instead, He brings both of these images together and we're going to see the power of this imagery. He does both of these. I think He's doing that purposely to focus on and emphasize that He wants us to understand the strength of the desire that we're to have in our pursuit of righteousness.

So let's take that idea of the physical realm and when you think in terms of hungering and thirsting in the physical realm, the first thing that we would say is this is a sign of life. It's a sign of life when you're hungry and thirsty. Dead people have no interest in food and drink. That is the exact thing that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14. The natural man has no interest in the things of God and spiritual things. Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. So the natural person has no

appetite for righteousness. They have no appetite for spiritual things. They may be pursuing some spirituality. They may be pursuing some form of religion, but we're not talking about that. We're talking about Biblical truth. So when Jesus says that you are to be hungry and thirsty, He immediately brings us into the world of life, which is a sign to be spiritually alive, even though in some cultures they actually take food and water and put it with the body. I can assure you that that body never touches that food and water. It has no interest in that because it's dead.

Secondly, it's a sign of health. To be hungry and thirsty is actually a sign of health. If you go to your doctor, it's not unusual for him to ask about your appetite. Why is that? Because to be hungry and thirsty is a natural indication, not just of life, but it's a natural indication of being healthy. It speaks to the vitality of our body. When little Johnny wakes up in the morning and says he doesn't feel good and wants to stay home from school today, his mom might say, okay, well then you go ahead and go back to bed. Johnny says, after breakfast I will. Then mom says after breakfast you'll get dressed and you'll go to school because an indicator of feeling good is we want to eat and drink. So it's a sign of health.

Thirdly, it's a continual intense desire. It's a continual and intense desire. It is rather remarkable how we have trained ourselves to realize that we need three meals a day. Sometimes there are more than that when you think in terms of the nibbling that goes on in between. But hunger and thirst tend to be continuing and intense desires that we have, even to the point that we eat a meal and 30 minutes later somebody in your family group says I'm hungry. How can that be? I'm starving and we just got up 30 minutes ago. When Jesus chooses this imagery, He does so purposefully because to be hungry and thirsty is a continual and intense desire.

What do we do when we're hungry and thirsty? In the land that we live in and the blessings that we enjoy, there are very few people sitting in this room this morning who know true hunger and true thirst. We think we're so hungry we're going to die, but we're really probably pretty far away from dying from hunger. In this time in the first century, these people oftentimes lived on the brink of famine and drought and hunger and thirst. These things were a pretty regular part of their life. They didn't go into the kitchen and open the refrigerator. They didn't go into the pantry and open up the pantry doors. They

didn't jump in their car and go to a fast food restaurant a mile down the road. They literally lived oftentimes from day-to-day with gnawing hunger and thirst as a reality of their life. Jesus does something for us here to help us see in this very practical realm. Physical hunger and thirst is to be a picture for us of something that He wants us to see. What is that? He wants to take us into the spiritual realm. He wants us to take it into the spiritual realm. We are to hunger and thirst after righteousness in the spiritual realm. When you think of that spiritually and you translate that truth from the physical into the spiritual, what do we have?

First of all, we have a sign of life again, don't we? To hunger and thirst after righteousness is truly a sign of life. Only spiritually alive people desire spiritual things. That's what we've already indicated. The natural man doesn't care about that stuff. They have no interest in that stuff. If you were to go out this afternoon and do an on-the-street interview, and you were to say to somebody that passed by do you have a hunger and thirst for righteousness. They would think you're crazy. How many do you think would say a goal of their life right up there at the top is to be hungry and thirsty for righteousness? They wouldn't connect with what you're even talking about. Jesus says it's a sign physically of life, but it's also a sign spiritually of life.

Secondly, it's a sign of health. What we've said about the Beatitudes is that this is a description of the life of Christ. What we're looking at here is a life of one who is walking in the Spirit. When you read the Beatitudes, you're right in visualizing a picture of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ being lived out in these words. This is the way He lived His life every day. This is a picture of a man who is walking in perfect fellowship with His Father and in harmony with the Holy Spirit. It's a beautiful picture to us of a life free from sin and a life that is lived in harmony with God and with the Spirit.

Then lastly, it's continual and it's intense. That's the imagery that Jesus wants us to have. Here is not somebody who occasionally has a desire for righteousness. This isn't a picture that Jesus paints for us of someone who wants to do some slight modified self-improvement. That's not what He's putting before us. To hunger and thirst for righteousness would cause us to say that this is not optional. This is not luxury. This is an absolute necessity that He has before us. I think I've said before but back in Psalm 40 and verse 6, I think you have the life verse of Christ. and it says this: "In sacrifice and

offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will of God your law is within my heart.' that's the life of Christ lived out. I delight to do Your will..." I delight. I am pursuing. I have a hunger and thirst after righteousness, to please God. So you want to know what a life of pleasing God looks like? How much do I want that? How much do I want that to be true of me? How much do I want it to be said of me that my life is lived in its entirety to please God? He is not on the periphery. He is not something that is a part of my life just one morning a week. Like a starving man wants food. That's how much we're supposed to want it. Like a thirsty person in the desert wants water. That's the way we're supposed to want it. What Jesus wants us to see is there is a desperation that is to be part of our spiritual desires. There's a desperation. That's why He uses this double imagery. That's why He talks about hungering and thirsting together as being something that is necessary for us to pursue righteousness.

Let's look secondly at what is it that we're pursuing. What are we supposed to be hungry for? What are we supposed to be thirsty for? The desire that is pursued in one word is this word "righteousness". Righteousness. Righteousness is a very familiar word to most of you. If you're familiar with the Bible and the storyline of the Bible, you know the word "righteousness" is used a lot in the Bible. In fact, it's one of the most often used words. It's used over 600 times in the Old and New Testaments. Here it is that we have this word before us. So let's define it. We're familiar with it. We use it, but maybe we don't always define it. So let's do that.

When you think of the word righteousness, it is always related to and connected to the word "right". So when you see the word "righteousness", the easiest way to remember what righteousness means is just take the first part of that word. Righteousness has to do with being right. We talk about the fact that God is righteous. That means God is right. God is always right. Everything that God does is always right. Righteousness in its most basic definitions, its most basic usage simply means that you're doing something that's right. Take that with regard to the character of God and how God works in our lives and in our world, and that's very encouraging. The Bible obviously describes God often as being a God of righteousness. That tells us that

everything that God does is right. We may not understand it. We may be totally confused about it, but because God is righteous, everything that He does is right.

Now here is what we need to understand. The other part of that definition is to realize that righteousness is related to God's standard. We don't get to decide what is right and what is wrong. That's where our world lives. Our world lives in a view that I get to decide what's right for me, and you get to decide what's right for you. You can be right, and I can be right, and we can be on the absolute total end of the spectrum. The Bible talks about righteousness and doesn't allow us to bring our own definition and our own list of behaviors that we say are right or not. The Bible talks about righteousness as always related to that standard and that standard is God and that standard is revealed in His Word. It's not a self-righteousness that we're pursuing with hunger and thirst. It's the righteousness that God has revealed to us. God's righteousness is always consistent with His character.

One thing we can't say without qualification is God can do anything. There are some things that God cannot do. One of the things that God can't do is He can never act outside of His character. He could never act in a way that is unrighteous. There are things God can't do. Anything inconsistent with His character, He simply can't do. Why not? Because God is a righteous God. Everything that He does, His righteousness requires to be right. So when you think of it in that way, God says to us through His Son in this 4th beatitude, you are to have a passionate desire. In fact, you are to want it so bad it's like a hungry man who hadn't eaten for days wants food. It is like a person who hasn't had water for an extended period of time and who wants something to drink. That's what you're to bring in this pursuit of righteousness.

Since the Bible uses this word in more than one way, let's look at the uses of this word and zero in exactly on what kind of righteousness Jesus is telling us to go after. We know it's not self-righteousness, so we're not going to bring that one into the discussion. It has to do with God and it has to do with the righteousness of God. When we bring it into that category, there's a couple of choices. The first one we would simply call God's imputed righteousness. God's imputed righteousness. In Genesis 15:6, one of my favorite verses in the Old Testament, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for

righteousness. There's a righteousness that the Bible describes as being an imputed righteousness. That is something that occurs, the Bible tells us, at the moment of faith in Christ. The moment the gospel is understood, the moment you realize that God is not asking you to do anything to earn your way to heaven, and you realize that Jesus did everything that needs to be done on that cross for you, you believe what Christ has done was done on your behalf, at the moment of that faith transaction the Bible says God imputes into your account His own righteousness. It really is an accounting term that the Bible uses. Literally it says that God takes His righteousness and He wipes out our deficit and He puts in that account the very righteousness of Christ. When we talk about imputed righteousness, we're talking about our standing before God. We're talking about our position. We're talking about the way God sees us. If you put your trust in Christ this morning, then God sees you and He looks at your bank account and in that account, He sees that it is filled with the righteousness of His Son, the righteousness of Christ. That's what we mean when we talk about imputed righteousness. Jesus is not inviting us in Matthew 5:6 to pursue with passion that imputed righteousness. That is the gift that God gives to us by faith by means of His grace. The Beatitudes, as we said at the beginning, are not laying out a path of salvation. If they were, then that might work here, but that's not what's happening. So, if it's not imputed righteousness, what is it?

The other way the Bible uses this word is to talk about practical righteousness. Practical righteousness. Sometimes practical righteousness is called imparted righteousness, or even some refer to it as implanted righteousness. But it's imparted and it's implanted by the Holy Spirit. When we talk about implanted righteousness or when we talk about practical righteousness, another word that the Bible uses to describe that is sanctification. So in the first case, God's imputed righteousness is justification. We're declared righteous. We're not made righteous. We're declared righteous because into our account goes God's righteousness. In this case, in practical righteousness, we're talking about sanctification. We're talking about the work of the Spirit of God whereby He sets us apart. It is my daily walk with God that is in view here. My behavior every day is to conform to a certain standard of righteousness and what is that standard? It is revealed to us right here. It's demonstrated powerfully in the life of our Lord. We have the Word of God. We have the life of Christ.

I want to go again, and I've done this each week, but I want to go to James 1. I remind you that James again is reflecting a lot on the Sermon on the Mount. In James 1, I'm coming back to the same passage but it seems every week he speaks something about this matter: "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." What kind of righteousness is that? It's practical righteousness. He's talking to believers who have received the imputed righteousness of Christ. Then He says you've got to exercise a certain level of constraint. You've got to talk less. Listen more. Don't be angry. Because when you do that, you're producing or you're seeing produced in your life the righteousness of God. Then He goes on to say: "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." Remember when you see the word "save", it's good to just have come into your head immediately the word "deliverance". He is not talking here about salvation from eternal judgment or hell. He is talking about salvation day-to-day, deliverance day-to-day. He's talking about the implanted word and walking in God's truth in this standard of righteousness that He has revealed to us. He's telling us this is how it is that we live out in a very practical way the life of Christ. Jesus is simply calling us, friends, to be passionate in our desire to walk the way Jesus walked, to live the way Jesus lived, to treat others the way Jesus treated others, to speak the way Jesus spoke, to think the way Jesus thought. That's what He's talking about, to be passionate in that, to have a hunger and thirst for a life that pleases God. We naturally want to please ourselves. That's not pursuing with hunger and thirst the righteousness that God has for us.

In this Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about righteousness five or six times. Let me show you two other examples before we move on. In Matthew 5:20 – "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." We will get to that eventually, but when He said that, everybody fell over that was standing because that was the measure. If you have the righteousness of a Pharisee? Are you kidding me? Those guys were by the book. Jesus says that's not what we're looking for here. We're looking for an implanted righteousness that is produced by the Holy Spirit, that's in conformity to the conduct of

the word of God. Then a very familiar verse over in Matthew 6:33. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything else gets thrown in. we're going to see this developed as we go forward with this. This is the practical righteousness that Jesus had in mind for us to be pursuing and desiring.

Let's look then last at how it is that this desire is realized. How is this desire realized in our lives? I don't know about you but one of the great enemies of my soul, other than just the broad category of sin, is to allow apathy and indifference and complacency to creep into my life. You find yourself in a place of lifeless spirituality. When I wrote that down, I thought that like an oxymoron. There shouldn't be anything that would fall under the category of lifeless spirituality. Spirituality by definition is someone who is hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Someone who is pouring themselves into the things that God has prepared for us to walk in. so here is what we're up against often times. It's pictured all through the Old Testament for us.

It is interesting how just in the last week or so I've had a number of conversations with people about the Old Testament and what the Old Testament is picturing for us. Clearly one of the things that the Old Testament does, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10 is these things are written as an example for you because you're just like these people. We may not like that too much. Just like when Jesus calls us sheep. We don't really like that that much. But when Paul says all of these examples in the Old Testament are just pictures of us, it is intended to cause us to read those pages and say yeah, that's what I would have done. That's me. I would have been that way. Here you have the people of God in the Old Testament. What are they seeing? God is demonstrating His faithfulness and His glory and His power and His provision in powerful and dramatic ways – opening up the Red Sea, opening up the Jordan River, providing for them food and manna, and water out of a rock. It just went on and on. They saw all of this and what happened to them? They became cold. They became indifferent. They became apathetic. Spiritual things had no passion and there was no desire to press in to this God who was providing all of this. They became very satisfied with receiving the gifts from God and not pressing into the One who was giving them those gifts. That's where we find ourselves often. We're the most blessed people in the world. We don't think about food and water and where our next meal is coming from. We're planning where we're going

to go eat in the next day. Jesus says you know what? Your love for and your desire for food ought to be mirrored in your love for and your desire for the things of God.

We look at this and think, how is this realized in my life? Well, again, first of all, we've got to realize that what Jesus is offering us here is not luxury. This is not pick and choose. It's necessity. It is the absolute necessities of life. Hungering and thirsting. Those two verbs are in the present tense. It's not you hunger and thirst once and you get full and you're done. No, this is a continual intense desire. It's a sign of health. It's a sign of life. I say to you as I say to myself, our physical lives are sustained by food and water. Our spiritual lives are sustained by pursuing righteousness. You're not growing in your walk with God if that isn't the case. There's something spiritually not right. You're not spiritually healthy if that isn't the case. Peter said we're to desire the milk of the Word like a newborn baby desires his mother's milk. That's an intense and strong and continual desire. Listen. When the prodigal son was hungry, he went and ate with the pigs. When the prodigal son was starving, he went home to his father. He realized that was the place where he could be satisfied. Not over there. What Jesus describes for us here is a necessity for our spiritual health and vigor and life.

I enjoy watching those National Geographic type shows and often times some of the best ones are in Africa. You follow the life of a herd of animals or a particular animal and sometimes they go through times of severe drought in that continent. Some of those accounts reflect that. You see these animals as the weeks and months go on, waiting for the next rains. You see the extent to which the animal kingdom goes to try to find the necessities for life. There's an absolute desperation that's a part of that pursuit. Food to stay alive or food for their young, or water to keep them going. That's the imagery that Jesus gives us here. If we don't realize that's the absolute necessity of our spiritual health, then we're not spiritually very healthy. We're in trouble.

Secondly, the more we are satisfied with life in Christ, the more we're satisfied in this pursuit of righteousness, the more we're dissatisfied with the substitutes. What are the substitutes? There's a whole host of them. It is easy to think immediately of all the things that the world offers to satisfy the longings of our heart. In some cases, it might literally be physical food and drink that we would have such a passion for and we're so captured by that it really becomes almost an idol in our life. It can get to that point. It

goes far beyond that though. There are all kinds of enticements that the world puts before us every day and says satisfy that longing in your heart with this. You know the list as well as I do. You know the things that tug at your heart and the idols that you and I tend to lift up in our life in hopes that somehow that's going to satisfy the longing of our heart. We fail to remember what Augustine said, that there's that vacuum. There's that hole that can't be filled by any of this stuff. It can only be filled by a holy and righteous God. All of those things are at the end of the day mere distractions to the necessity of what it is that we really need. How often we say to our children or to other adults in our family group don't eat that. It's going to spoil your dinner. Why don't we eat before it's time to sit down for a meal? For the express purpose of it's not as healthy. It's going to spoil our appetite for what is to come. That's what Jesus is saying to us here. Don't do that. Don't yield to those things.

Listen to what John Piper said: "God has put eternity in our hearts and we have an inconsolable longing. We try to satisfy it with scenic vacations, accomplishments of creativity, stunning cinematic productions, sexual exploits, national sports extravaganzas, hallucinogenic drugs, aesthetic rigors, managerial excellence, and on and on and on it goes. But the longing remains in the heart." Listen to what Isaiah said. Isaiah 55: "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live..." Be healthy and be vigorous and be what God intended for you and I to be . so there it is. We have to lay aside the things that so easily distract us, the writer of Hebrews says. Lay aside every encumbrance and the sin that so easily distracts us.

Then, would you notice lastly, there are no shortcuts to what Jesus offers us because there are no shortcuts to righteousness. There is only one way. It begins with hungering and thirsting after righteousness. I want to show you something that takes us a little deeper into the weeds than we like to go necessarily within the Greek text here. But what I want you to see is when Jesus says blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, in all languages and it's true in the Greek as well, when you have a verb you generally have a noun and there are rules that govern what nouns and what verbs go together and how they go together. In this case, when Jesus says blessed are

you if you hunger and thirst after righteousness, He should have used what is called the genitive noun. I share that because here's what I want you to see. If you're sitting at a table and you're eating and there's a plate of bread, we would say in the English language would you please pass me the bread? In the Greek language, you could use a partitive genitive that would actually communicate please pass me some of the bread because you don't want all of the bread. Well, you really do, but you don't want all of the bread, you just want some of the bread. So it would be poor grammar to say pass me all the bread. I want all of the bread. We would all understand that we want some bread. Jesus doesn't use the genitive partitive here, which would say I want some righteousness. I hunger and thirst for some righteousness. He disregards the normal rules of grammar and He uses the accusative verb, which is to say this. I want all of the righteousness.

I want to hunger and thirst after it all. I want all that Christ has to offer me. I don't want to be satisfied with nibbling around the edges. I don't want Jesus just on the periphery of my life. I want to submit in totality to the Lordship of Christ in every area of my life whatever that might be. The desires, the goals, the things that I pursue – all of those things are being brought into conformity every day to the Lordship of Christ. I don't need the recognition of the world. I don't need the wealth of the world. I don't need the popularity. I don't need their pat on my back. I don't need any of that. What I need and what I desire and what I want more than anything else is to have all that God has for me. That's what Jesus says is to be our pursuit. I want all of Christ. I want to be all in. Do you know why? Because He says that, my friends, and that alone is where true satisfaction lies. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they're going to be satisfied. He doesn't need to elaborate on what that satisfaction is, although I think the text tells us. It is Christ. The satisfaction for our soul is the very righteousness that we're desiring. The very thing that Jesus says we are to desire becomes the very thing that ultimately satisfies us. Here we are. We're like the believers of the Old Testament, easily distracted, looking around and seeing the cares of the world and the things of the world and substituting all of these lesser things. They end up never satisfying our soul because that's reserved for Christ alone.

Remember the rich young ruler? When he came to Jesus with all that money. What did he want? He wanted a little bit of righteousness. What he said in effect to Jesus was Jesus, I've got my world here and I'd like to add you into it. Jesus said what you need to do young man is you need to go and give all that stuff away and you need to come to me and me alone. He couldn't do it. He couldn't bring himself to do it. To those whose greatest passion in life is to please God, God promises the greatest possible satisfaction. What do we take away?

I came across this quote by Robert Murray McShane and I thought this needs to be my prayer. This needs to be our prayer. Let us pray "Lord, make me as holy as a saved sinner can be." Father, in this work of sanctification that you're doing in my life, continue to stir within my heart such a passion for the things of God so that I am truly seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all this other stuff will take care of itself. God, cause me to mourn for sin in my life and sin in the world around me and cause me to press into You. Cause me to walk in such a way that I am poor in spirit before You, depending on You every day. Help me to walk in the meekness and the strength that is given by Your Spirit. Lord, make us as holy as a saved sinner can be.

That's a wonderful prayer if you've placed your faith and trust in Christ as your personal Savior, if you've already received the imputed righteousness of Christ. But if you've not this morning ever had a point in your life where you put your trust in Jesus and in what He did on the cross for you, then what you need this morning is that righteousness that God offers as a gift. He offers that gift not on the basis of what we can do for Him, but what He's done for us. We would offer that to you as well this morning, that what Jesus did on that cross He did for you and He did for me. We need to lay aside our efforts and we need to accept His grace.

Let's pray together. Father God, we pray for that great stirring of Your Spirit in our lives. Lord, we confess, I confess, how easy it is to yield to apathy and to indifference and to coldness of heart. Here is the work of God's Spirit offered to us and we pray that Your spirit, Father, would stir within this body of believers called Covenant a great desire for righteousness, that we would walk in truth, that we would walk in life, that we would walk in the love of Your Spirit. Lord, if there's someone here this morning who

has never put their trust in Christ, we ask that your Holy Spirit would give them understanding. Maybe they have heard this many times before, but, Lord, may this be the morning that they say yes to Your truth, to Your gospel, to Your grace. May they realize all human effort is fruitless in the light of what Jesus has done on the cross. We pray to that end. In Jesus's name, Amen.