

A SERMON TO LITTLE ONES

By Elder Gregg Thompson

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled;” -- Matthew 5:6.

Our text is found in a sermon delivered by the greatest, wisest, and best preacher that ever lived in this world, and spoke to men. He was too wise to err. He knew the full meaning of every word he spoke, the thoughts of all hearts, and the true condition of man in his fallen, sinful condition, and how to speak to him when sensible of his true condition, in the way of comfort and encouragement. He knew that man in his sinful state, unquickened by the Spirit, was dead in sin, and past feeling; his mind blinded by the god of this world, and having ears but hearing not. He knew precisely what the word death meant; that it was an entire separation from life and the absence of it; so that the dead are past feeling. Naturally man is alive, and has all the senses to see, hear, and know natural things, and to walk after the things of this world, and to fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Death, whether it be temporal or spiritual, is a separation from life. You little ones, who do not claim much worldly wisdom, know that a snake may lie dormant and stiff in the winter, with no visible signs of life, but it is not dead; for if you warm it, it will soon be as active and full of life as ever; but cut off its head, and it dies; and all the heat or other means you can use can not give it life. This you can comprehend, and this is what death means.

Human philosophers talk much about the five senses being the avenues to the soul, and the only medium through which knowledge can be imparted; but your minds can comprehend the truth, that death destroys all the senses so that the dead can neither hear, see, taste, nor feel; for where these senses are present and active, the person is not dead. The Ephesian saints before they were quickened, were dead in sins; and the natural man

can not know the things of the Spirit. We now understand what dead means; and such were not the persons addressed by the Savior; for the dead never hunger nor thirst, nor have any desires whatever; for in death man's thoughts all perish with him. No knowledge or instruction can be imparted to the dead; for all the avenues through which knowledge is received are destroyed. You little ones, who make no pretensions to great worldly wisdom, can now see clearly that life must be in you, and your senses in a proper condition to receive instruction before you can hunger or thirst, or learn or know any thing.

As little as your pretensions to learning may be, you will readily see that life is not knowledge, but that which prepares us to receive knowledge, for the newborn babe has life, and all the senses, but it is almost without knowledge; yet it soon feels hunger and-thirst; and having life, it will soon begin to look for its food, and in whose arms it is safe. It is now clear to our little minds, and we can comprehend the truth, that the dead can not receive instruction or knowledge by sounds, or words, or arguments; by light, feeling, smelling, or tasting; for none of these sensibilities exist in the dead. This explains to us what Paul meant when he said, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." You will now see that this truth is a self-evident fact; that before knowledge of any kind can be imparted, life must exist in us; and life is the gift of God, and is derived from him; for he is its fountain. "The breath of the Almighty hath given me life." This is true, whether it be vegetable, animal, or spiritual life; seeing it is God that "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." As natural beings, God has given us natural life, and with it natural sensibilities by which we can understand natural things; but he has declared in the word of inspiration, "The world by wisdom knew not God." Why is it that it cannot know God? The same word says of the natural man, "Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Here the fact of man's inability, and the reason why he cannot know God are plainly given.

Your little minds have never been bewildered by human philosophy, and can easily understand this text, and give the reason why the natural man cannot understand and know the things of God. He is dead in sin, completely separated from spiritual life, and destitute of it. Therefore he cannot know or understand spiritual things, until spiritual life is given him. Hence the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; to them it has no power nor comfort, for it is to them a stumbling block and foolishness. They are as incapable of receiving its comforting and joyful instruction, as is the dead soldier when the shout of victory is raised by the army.

Christ, the speaker of our text, knew all this, and who it was to whom his words would be sweet and comforting when he said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." For none do hunger and thirst but those blessed with life; and none hunger and thirst for spiritual things until spiritual life is given; and the blessed book, from which you learn the truth as it is in Jesus, declares that this life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Nowhere does it speak of eternal life being given through any other medium; but in it we read, "*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.*" Parental training, prayers, Sunday schools, or any other instrumentalities can not give you life; you must have Christ, for it is in him, and through him God gives you this life, and through no other medium. If the preacher as an instrument has the power to give eternal life, he has power also to forgive sins; but this power has not been delegated to men or means, it is "*the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" The forgiveness of sins is through his blood. To attribute either of these to the preacher is idolatry; and John says, "*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*"

When the sinner is blessed with this spiritual life, he is blessed with spiritual sensibilities so that he can see as he never saw before; he can taste, feel, and hear as he never did before, and trembles under the

preached word; for it sounds to him as it never did before. Now a hungering and thirsting is felt in the soul, which was never felt before, and these feelings are evidences that life is there; but they do not know where their food and water are to come from.

Come, little ones, let us talk about that a little; for you will never forget that dark and gloomy hour in your experience when you were made alive spiritually, , and could see that the law was spiritual and just, but that you were carnal and sinful. O what a hungering was then felt for spiritual food! but you knew not where to go to get it. Like the newborn babe you now hunger and thirst, but know not when to go to get the food and water you are hungering and thirsting for. You have life, and feel your hunger and thirst raging within you; but, O where is the food and water that I must have or die? To work you go with all the powers you have; you turn your face to Sinai, and hope to draw some comfort from the law; but "while trembling at the foot of the mountain covered with fire and smoke, and your sins like dark cloud hang over you, and despair is gathering over your soul, you hear the voice and terrible words: Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. There is no life for me in the law, it is death, death, nothing but death! and under a sense of the justice; God's law, and my thick cloud of guilt and in, my trembling lips repeat the words of the poet:

**Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death,
And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well.**

"Hope is gone; I must die; there is no food or water for me. God's just wrath is ready to be poured out upon my guilty soul. Friends can not comfort me; preachers can not comfort me; my own prayers are like a tinkling cymbal, or sounding brass; they can give me no comfort, for the just and holy law says, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die;' and I die to all hope of mercy, or deliverance from the curse and load of sin and guilt that presses

me down to endless woe." O, little children, you have not forgotten it; but with your little preacher, while you hear this you will travel back to those dark days, and feel the truth, that none but God could deliver you. But when God who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shined in the heart and gave you to see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, you was then made to cry in ecstasy of joy inexpressible and full of glory "God has become my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." And O with what joy and gladness you now draw water from the wells of salvation! You now turn to the Savior's sermon on the mount, and read it as you never read it before; it is full of sweet instruction, of blessed comfort you never saw there before; and O how sweet the closing words of our text come to your heart, and fill it with courage and comfort. It is one of the wells of salvation, from which God's strength now enables you with gladness to draw the water that quenches your raging thirst. "They shall be filled." O, little ones, he who can not lie has spoken these words for you; and as you read the blessed words, and have the witness of the Spirit in your hearts, you have some foretastes of the joys that are in reserve for you, when your little vessel shall land on the immortal shore. Your trials here shall soon end: the endless feast is drawing nigh, when you shall drink at the fountain above, and eat at the table of the Lord, and hunger and thirst no more forever. My little ones, may you and your little preacher meet in that happy place, where there will be no sin or death, doubts or fears, where all tears will be wiped away from our eyes, and we shall hunger and thirst no more. When your sorrows here shall end, you shall hear the sweet voice of your Father's call: "Child, come home," and heaven and glory will be yours forever and ever, O glory, glory glory! Amen.