**HOLY SAVIOUR, BITTERNE BIBLE STUDY – WEEK BEGINNING MAY 31st (Beatitudes 4)**

*We are continuing our series of studies on the Beatitudes which is the theme homegroup leaders settled on for this term. The Beatitudes teach us about Christian character, something which the current crisis may well be helping to shape!* ***Jot down your thoughts about the questions in the spaces provided*** *–* ***and it would be really good to share them with others.*** *Phone, Skype, email some members of your homegroup or a friend and/or email me your thoughts (* brianparfitt@btinternet.com *).* ***Brian Parfitt***

What are the favourite food and drinks you would really miss? Have you ever been really hungry or thirsty? Imagine living in a place where real thirst and hunger are a common reality – how would hunger and thirst fell then?

**This week’s Beatitude is one which speaks of experiencing hunger and thirst for something other than food or drink. Many versions translate Matthew 5.6 as, ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.’ It’s not easy to pin down what ‘righteousness’ means here. The Good News Bible tries to explain it by saying, ‘Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully!’ However in the Bible righteousness seems to go deeper than just doing right. The longing spoken of here reflects a longing for a life-transforming relationship with God, being right with God, accepted by God and knowing him but then reflecting that in a life lived for God.**

**To explore what this Beatitude means we are going to look at some passages from the Old and New Testament. *(If it’s helpful you might look at them over a few days, one at a time, rather than all at once.)***

The idea of hungering and thirsting for God occurs in a number of places in the Old Testament. Among them **Psalm 42.1-2 says, ‘As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?’**  How have you experienced that sort of longing for God? **Read Isaiah 55.1-3.** In what ways do people seek to meet their inner longings through things that don’t ultimately satisfy? How does God’s promise here speak to those deep needs? How do the words in Isaiah echo Jesus’ words?

Later in his sermon Jesus speaks of seeking first God’s kingdom and his righteousness.  **Read Matthew 6.25-34.**  What do these verses say about where seeking God should come in our priorities? What things can squeeze out our desire for God and his righteousness? What might ‘seeking God’ mean? How is this seeking rewarded?

Paul tells of how, in order to gain true righteousness, found by trusting Christ, he had to abandon the self-righteousness he had sought by being a good law-keeping Jew. **Read Philippians 3.4-14.** What had Paul counted as loss in order to know Christ (verses 4-8)? What had he gained by simply trusting in Christ (verses 9-11)? How do verses 12-14 show his ‘hunger and thirst’ for righteousness? Make a list of your ‘losses and gains’ as a Christian?

Those who are in a right relationship with God show that in their character. **Read Matthew 25.31-40.** How is the character of a righteous person described here? What are the challenges for us, particularly in our current circumstances, about being people who not only love God wholeheartedly but love our neighbours too?

Reflect on what you have discovered from ***each of the passages*** we have looked at and how they help you understand this Beatitude? How have you been challenged to ‘hunger and thirst for righteousness’?