

Day 18
No Righteousness, No Entry!

Matthew 5:6 (ESV) “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Hunger and thirsting after righteousness; what a clarion call for those who desire to build the right way. Remember this very clearly: you are the builder, and Jesus provides the materials. Your willingness to follow His plan and use His materials will determine whether what you are building will remain upright once everything is said and done. Just because we build, does not mean there are no cracks in our foundation. Cracks only show when the storms are cleared out. So Jesus gives us the cement; a continued hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Jesus’ audience had their understanding of righteousness. Righteousness was something that the religious leaders of the day prided themselves on. They wore righteousness as a badge of honor, but more than a badge of honor, as a way of showing how truly religious they were. Righteousness was not bestowed on them; righteousness was earned by them. For the Pharisees, righteousness had three components to it: prayer, fasting and the giving of alms. Their righteousness, according to them, was shown in their exhibiting these three behaviors. It was what they bragged about. So Jesus, in His sermon, addresses all three of these aspects of righteousness.

This was such an enormous part of what Jesus communicated in His sermon on the Mount that at least one-third of His sermon is dedicated to it. As a matter of fact, the whole Chapter Six, is exclusively addressing these three components of righteousness. If Jesus placed such an emphasis on it, I think we ought to pay attention to it. However, those listening to Jesus must have been shaken in their sandals when He dropped this profound statement on them. Here’s what He said: **“But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!” (Matthew 5:20 NLT)**

This is another one of those gulping moments where what Jesus says, almost literally, takes everyone’s breath away. Don’t miss the fact that Jesus said this in a warning: **“But I warn you...** Your righteousness must be better than that of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees.” How on earth is that even possible? The warning carries even more weight when Jesus finishes with the exclamation point: **“You will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!”** You are not going to make it. No righteousness; no entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. “How on earth is anybody going to make it?” must have been the predominant thought of all of the listeners! “We thought at least the religious leaders and Pharisees would get a going-into-the-Kingdom-of-Heaven card? They pray all of the time. We see them pray in the synagogue and in public places. They fast all of the time. We see that on their sad faces when they don’t eat. They give all of the time. We hear that when they announce their giving for everyone to hear. These are the righteousness dudes. Now our righteousness must exceed theirs? That is not humanly possible!”

That is exactly the point that Jesus is making. If our righteousness has to be better than the religious leaders of the day, it can only mean one thing: it must be given to us, not earned by us! Paul writes and says: **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV)** How do I get this righteousness? By simply being in Him, being in Jesus. There is no other way to enter the Kingdom and experience the power of the King, except through Jesus! Meaning, our righteousness places us in a right relationship with the Father. We are

legally justified and declared righteous by God. So, now we possess a moral, righteous character and conduct that pleases God. All of this because of what Jesus did for us.

Righteousness is a requirement to enter into God's Kingdom; without it, there is no entry. We can try to do it the Pharisees' way, but we cannot pray enough, fast enough and give enough to open the way. So we hunger and thirst for God's righteousness and that leads us to the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jesus becomes our door, and our righteousness, and it exceeds anything that we could ever attempt on our own. So, we can enter into the very Presence of our Heavenly Father, heaven's Most Holy Place, not because of anything we earned or deserved, but through the life-giving way that Jesus became for us.

The writer of Hebrews reaffirms this reality by painting this picture for us: *"And so, dear brothers and sisters, **we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. 20 By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. 21 And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, 22 let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.**" (Hebrews 10:19-22 NLT)*

In the words of that famous theologian, "Wow wow, chicky, wow wow!" That's Hebrew for "Glory to God!" Relish the fact that Jesus did it for you. Let your pursuit of His righteousness lead you to the cross. Let your hunger for His justification lead you to gratitude. Let your thirst for His amazing grace lead you to your knees. His righteousness has become our door to a life that leads to complete satisfaction. The Door is open, the price is paid, the invitation is sent, the Way is made; just walk in Him!

Reflection and Prayer:

- Read and reflect on the following verses.
- Thank the Father for His amazing gift of righteousness through Jesus.
- **Romans 3:25-26(NLT)** *"For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, **26** for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus."*
- **Romans 5:16-18(NLT)** *"And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. **17** For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. **18** Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone."*