

## An Inspirational Feast

### Mt 5:6 Blessed are They Who Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness

Righteousness is said to be the state of one as he ought to be before God. But it is more; It is that inner quality, the condition of the heart, that characterizes that state of being. Righteousness, in the Bible, is the virtue (ness) of being what we ought to be in relation with God and therefore, with other believers and even the world.

Another scholar informs: “It should be emphasized particularly that [righteousness :in the Old Testament: we know the word Jehovah T’sidkenu, Jeremiah 23:6. The 'NU' is the word 'our' compare: Melchizedek] *implies relationship* A man is righteous when he meets certain claims which another has on him *in virtue of relationship*. ..the righteousness of God is primarily His covenantal rule in fellowship with His people. “

“The highest goal and virtue in this sort of culture is supporting the community. This makes people happy (makarios).” Richards, E. Randolph; O'Brien, Brandon J.. Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes (p. 97). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

The Dictionary of New Testament Theology, also, calls, “Righteousness ... a term of relationship.” It is here where righteousness and justice meet. If we do what is right by someone, we do what is just and fair. The primary relationship for us is with our Lord Whom we follow and by extension, His people, other believers.

**A. W. Tozer**, correctly noted, “justice and righteousness are scarcely to be distinguished from each other. The same word in the original becomes in English justice or righteousness, almost, one would suspect, at the whim of the translator.

### A Covenantal God

Here is not the place but Christ bearing the “punishment” for our sins on Calvary is a judicial act because He is a *covenant* God. The covenant now is the **New Covenant** instituted, established and set in motion, upon Jesus' resurrection from the dead! But covenant itself is a relational term!

**Family**, with God, is everything. The Old Testament covenantal idea is inherent in the word “**redemption.**” cp Ruth. “To redeem” includes the idea “as a **kinsman**” The dictionary reads to “*redeem* with God, as subj [as the One Who redeems] implies **personal relationship**, chiefly in poetry.”

When He ransomed us, He bought us and made us family.

**Psalm 74:2** “Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old: the rod of thy inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, in which thou hast dwelt.”

And we have by faith become “the children of God”

**John 1:12** “But as many as received him, to them he gave power [authority] to become [at salvation] the sons of God, [by faith] even to them that believe on his name:”

**Matthew 7:9** “ what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask bread, will give him a stone?”

We have been brought—through salvation—into the community of the saints, [**John 21:23** “the *community* of believers.”

Jesus sent them out **by twos** ...never alone....Mark 6:7

## Sin

Sin is sin because it rips and tears at our relationships, first with God and then one another.

Robert Girdlestone in *Synonyms of the Old Testament* wrote “The Hebrew Bible meets us with a full acknowledgement of these manifold aspects of human suffering, and blends wrong doing and suffering to a remarkable degree, setting forth sin in its relation to God, to society, and to a man’s own self.” cp Psalm 51

## Biblical Righteousness

We were introduced to the Family of God, the Body of Christ, the Church and, consequently, every biblical directive or instruction involves our relationship with God's people and the world.

**1 John 4:12, 20** ”No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ... Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar.”

- Hungering and thirsting after righteousness does not mean finding a bible school or monastery to lock one's self away learning the written Word.
- Nor did God's Justice on Calvary free us from sin's liability to now live without Him.

## A Story

So, since this word speaks of fairness and justice as well as rightness, let's play philosopher and try to explain with a story:

You are shipwrecked alone on a deserted island and since you don't believe in God [pretend], you are literally, absolutely, alone ...and you're thirsty. So you climb a coconut palm to get something to drink but fall and break your leg.

Whose fault is this? Fault is a judicial term indicating someone didn't do “right by you.” (But it's hard to be litigious when you're alone!) This would mean that someone somewhere broke some social principle or maybe a written law that coconut palms should come with ladders or coconuts should have been harvested by now not requiring you to climb up the thing. Who might that be?

Perhaps, you go back to when you boarded that ill-fated craft to nowhere and blame the person who sold you on the voyage. But let's assume no one persuaded you to go along; it was your idea, plain and simple. Maybe *life* isn't fair? But this is circular reasoning because this is *your* life. And everything comes back to you, what you decided to do.

So, is it possible to be unfair to yourself? If you're not going to blame yourself and you're not going to blame God (because to blame Him means you have to believe in Him and that you were trusting Him to keep you safe; and this goes counter to your reasoning). And there is no one else around! What then? If you don't fault yourself, who then?

“Fault,” as pointed out, is a legal idea presupposing some law was broken. But you cannot break a law that does not exist on your little island—and why write one when you are its lone inhabitant?

The ideas of fairness and justice and what is the right thing to do are meaningless ideas because there is no one else there who you might relate with and ultimately blame for your misfortune.

Oh, if you managed to get a coconut and drink the milk inside, quenching your thirst, you probably would congratulate yourself in the privacy of your loneliness because when things go “right” there is no reason to think about blaming someone else. You did right by you!

## Allelous

We cannot do right by God if we are not doing right by each other.

Fellowship, by definition, is intimacy or closeness— a common burden, a common heart, a common prayer as well as working and worshipping together.

Acts 4:44 [NLT] ”And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had.”

I like to call this the “allelous” principle after the New Testament Greek word for one another. It is because of Calvary that we experience in this life a taste of the richness of fellowship with one another that will be ours in its fulness in the Kingdom to come:

- “comforted together” (Romans 1:12);
- “kindly affectioned one to another” (Romans 12:10);
- “same mind one toward another” (Romans 12:16);
- “edifying another” (Romans 14:19);
- “likeminded” (Romans 15:5);
- “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Romans 15:7);
- “admonishing one another” (Romans 15:14);
- “having the same care one for another [without partiality or favoritism]” (1 Corinthians 12:25);
- “by love serving one another” (Galatians 5:13);
- “Bearing ... one another’s burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2)” .
- ..and more.

We must allow ourselves to see the Word from this perspective : an increasing interest in caring about one another under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

Lord, bring to an end theological discussions that disrupt harmony. May our Bible studies become spiritual support groups. Give us a fellowship that answers a joint passion to apply God’s Word to life’s situations and watch it present solutions. Amen.

**Philippians 3:10** I want to know Christ... but I need Christian Community to do this because that's where Christ dwells, among His own. Learning to observe Jesus’ teachings means learning to observe Him. This can only happen as we follow Him.

I tire of people who already know what I need before I do. I want to be with people who allow me room to discover for myself how God's Word answers my quest to be closer to my Lord and closer to His people. I want to be part of a fellowship whose faith feeds mine and I, theirs, as we reread and restudy and rehearse the message.

I want to be a part of a group that would never think of arguing down the Word or explaining it away as something culturally out of date or unscientific or part of an ignorant past. Together we see the relevance of God's instructions and commands. We see learning in biblical history. We see today in an ancient record.

I want to be in a group that will take a chance at a possibility that we do not know yet all that is to be known, that we need to stay hungry and thirsty. I want to share with a people who are open to new interpretations of truth, open to change, open to hard lessons, and open to challenges. I want to be with people who are open to being wrong and open to correction.

I want to be in a group where we all recognize from the start that we are all at different places in the journey and our Lord alone is leading. It is a group that does not criticize or analyze one another's shortfalls, mistakes, or missteps.

## **The Preacher's Mistake**

**by William Crosswell Doane**

THE PARISH PRIEST  
Of austerity,  
Climbed up in a high church steeple  
To be nearer God,  
So that he might hand  
His word down to His people.

When the sun was high,  
When the sun was low,  
The good man sat unheeding  
Sublunary things.  
From transcendency  
Was he forever reading.

And now and again  
When he heard the creak  
Of the weather vane a-turning,

He closed his eyes  
And said, "Of a truth  
From God I now am learning."

And in sermon script  
He daily wrote  
What he thought was sent from heaven,  
And he dropped this down  
On his people's heads  
Two times one day in seven.

In his age God said,  
"Come down and die!"  
And he cried out from the steeple,  
"Where art thou, Lord?"  
And the Lord replied,  
"Down here among my people."

## The Beatitudes So Far

I want to be with people who are

1. sensing their own spiritual poverty and
2. are carrying a burden for one another's calling and to get back to full, Eden-level, fellowship with God.
3. These are the meek predisposed to follow Jesus wherever He leads and
4. are now prioritizing—nothing is more important to them than—to learn Christ.

**Matthew 5:20** “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Neil Silverberg wrote in *Shadows and Substance: The Truth about Jewish Roots and Christian Believers* quoting Steve Sanchez on Matthew 5, “If his disciples believed that they could earn a place in the kingdom by legalistic, self justification, instead of with heartfelt obedience to God, they were wrong. That attitude has no part in the kingdom. Instead kingdom righteousness requires what the law itself required. It requires heartfelt obedience characterized by the love of God.”