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**BLESSED ARE THOSE THAT HUNGER
AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS
(Matthew 5:6)**

This Beatitude presents a very real problem with external performance that the Jews of that day had as well as for us of this day. For us, it is also a key answer to the present dilemmas we are facing.

First let's look at the Pharisees. This Beatitude is presented in sharp contrast with the external righteousness of the Pharisees or religious ritual. In Matthew 5:20 Jesus tells the people that unless they get past the (external) righteousness of the Pharisees, they will not enter the kingdom of God.

What he was telling them then was in order to be part of God's kingdom, they had to get past the externals. What were their externals? Prayer, fasting, giving. (Matthew 6). Others were hand washing, cleansing of pots, and other rituals. Matthew 23 has a good listing of their rituals and traditions -- basically anything that could be done externally so that the shallow minded person didn't have to be real about devotion to God.

In the original language, the tense of the word "righteousness" can be taken in one of two ways. One is used as a part of and the other as a whole of. The word here is used as the whole. Jesus is saying the one who has an intense hunger and thirst for the whole of righteousness -- not just a part of. The Jews had a problem with doing that whole righteousness -- they settle for part of. As an example, in Matthew Chapter 6 they could do the prayers - to be seen by others; they could do giving and announce it with trumpets; and they fasted to appear they were suffering. Back in Matthew 5:20, Jesus then tells them to get past this and get down to true religion. To illustrate for application, change the words in verse 20 out for rules of society, politics, religion, church laws and issues, etc. That is, unless our righteousness gets past the externals of our social and religious world, we too will not enter that kingdom. This is a very intense subject, so I want to refer to a booklet I wrote a few years back called "The Struggle Between Two Principles." The Law Principle verses the Faith Principle. I have it attached. The booklet goes into some detail with the problem of externals and has more on the application of this subject.

In my own experience with this, I found that religious tradition, or what is called "churchianity", will not suffice for commitment to our God. We must get real about the commitment to God and be about meeting the needs of others over our traditions. And for immediate application, when we get past these externals and desire to enter true righteousness that God intended, we will be able to face any of these dilemmas in our present world.

Thanks again, and be sure to check out my booklet. I am also available for any questions at hisservant7478@gmail.com or 361-331-0824.

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