

Righteousness is a key theme in Matthew's Gospel. In Matt 3:13-17 Jesus begins his ministry by identifying with Israel through his water baptism, which was done to "fulfil all righteousness." Not only is Jesus being obedient to the Father as he submits under the ministry of John the Baptist heralding the coming of the Messiah, but it also signals to John that Jesus was initiating his plan to spread the gospel of the kingdom of God. This would bring about God's righteousness and rescue plan for all mankind. Furthermore, Jesus wasn't just the messenger of righteousness, but HE EMBODIED IT HIMSELF. 'The entire purpose of Jesus' mission is to fulfill or faithfully carry out all that his Father asks. Jesus is God's Son, not only because of his mysterious origin from God, but also because of his faithful and loving obedience...one demonstrated finally in Jesus' obedient death (on the cross).' Jesus' calling for disciples to be righteous means stepping into A RELATIONSHIP of TRUST and OBEDIENCE to God.

This perspective on "righteousness" is established clearly in the beatitudes (Matt.5:1-12). Jesus pronounces blessings on those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Jesus makes it a point to idealize and honour such people - they are starved by the wickedness of the world, without justice, weary from corruption, longing for a sensible world. When I read about those who yearn and hunger for righteousness, I remember Isaiah 5:7 and Isaiah 59, where God longs for justice and truth.

When we hunger for righteousness, we align with the Lord's prayer: Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (6:10). Both things belong together: longing for the kingdom and seeking to do God's will. Therefore, righteousness is about living faithfully as part of the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, where people live rightly according to the will and ways of God. The kingdom of God is the place where God's will is done.

Let's pray for the restoration and renewed RIGHTEOUS kingdom and live as His royal priesthood and kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:9).