

## ***Lessons From the Sermon of Jesus on the Mountain Part 10***

***“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled:” (Matthew 5:6 KJV)***

We continue in this message to study on how we hunger and thirst for righteousness.

We learn about the righteousness of God from the following:

***I. We learn from the life of Jesus Christ who teaches us how to hunger and thirst for righteousness:*** Jesus is our ultimate example of righteousness, and as we look deeply into His life and into His saying, and on what He did, we learn what God is requiring from us to live a righteous life that God desire. In any situation that you put in and you don't know how to act and what to do, ask yourself 'If Jesus is in the same situation, what He is going to do?' When you answer this question then you will know what to do.

***II. We learn from the Scriptures that teach us how to hunger and thirst for righteousness:*** The Scripture teach us how to hunger and thirst for righteousness and will confirm to us what filling and satisfaction we will receive from God as we delight in His righteousness. Therefore we read the Bible daily so we will be reminded about what we need to do and act in various aspects of our lives and in various circumstances that we are put in.

***III. Examples of righteous men in the Bible teaches us how to hunger and thirst for righteousness:*** The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke in chapter 11 about heroes of faith, and how they responded by faith doing the right things, and they wrought righteousness, that God ordained for them to do. The write of **Hebrews 11** brought lot of examples starting from Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Israelites and their expression of faith in the fall of Jericho's wall, and Rahab. But He could not speak about other Heros in details. Therefore he said, ***“32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.” (Hebrews 11:32-33 KJV)*** And he goes on and speak about others, without bringing their names, describing what they did by faith and how they achieved righteousness toward God, ***“34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” (Hebrews 11:34-38 KJV)*** When we go to the stories of each and every one of them, we can observe not only the good things that they did as they were inspired and led by God, but the strange things, the

painful things, the difficult things, the hard things, and the impossible things that they did to please God and the things that express their hunger and thirst for righteousness; then we learn how they achieved righteousness for God, fulfilling the purpose of God in their lives, for they obeyed what God was telling them to do at that time in the history and at those places that the Lord had placed them in.

That is why we need to read the Scriptures and compare ourselves with what they did, and as we learn from them, we start to apply what they did, and in this way the gap of difference between us and them would gradually become less and less, and we will find ourselves drawing near to God.

Our lives should not conform to what the people in the world desire and design but to what the Scriptures teaches us to do.

We should not be intimidated by what the people will speak against us or about us. But we need to be intimidated with what the opinion of God's Word and what it speaks about us.

I am not intimidated with what people ill opinion speaks about me, but rather I am intimidated with what the Word of God speaks about me. When I compare my life with those heroes in **Hebrews 11**, then I can see myself need much to be like them in life and obedience to the call of God in their lives and how they lived obedience to the commands of God.

We will understand more about the heroes of the Old Testament as we read Hebrews 11:39-40 ***“39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Hebrews 11:39-40 KJV)***

***A. They did what was asked of them to do without meeting Christ in person:*** They welcomed the promise of God in faith and obey what God was telling them to do and they got good report for their obedience, ***“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.” (Hebrews 11:39 KJV)*** They obeyed God by faith, even before they received the promises of God and even before meeting Christ, but they welcomed Him by faith.

***B. God had provided for us today something better:*** God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, who died for us on the cross to give us eternal life, that without Him the saints in the Old Testament would not be saved and got perfected, ***“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Hebrews 11:40 KJV)*** What he means with, ***“that they without us should not be made perfect,”*** he means that without Christ, the one whom they received they will not be made perfect. Both, we and Old Testament saints needs Christ for our perfection, but they welcome Christ and obeyed God's Word and instruction even before meeting Christ. How about us now? We are more privileged and the more we are called to obey the instruction of God. Therefore we need to be more obedient as we had received Christ and have eternal life in Him.

We will go now through the life of certain righteous people to understand how we can hunger and thirst for righteousness.

**1. Abel:** When Jesus faced the Pharisees and rebuked them for their sins He mentioned to them the sins of their fathers who refused the Word of the prophets and persecuted them, ***“32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? 34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.”*** (Matthew 23:32-35 KJV) Here Jesus mentioned to them the names of two righteous peoples, Abel and Zacharias son of Barachias.

Let us now go through the Scriptures and see what Abel did of righteousness:

***“1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. 8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”*** (Genesis 4:1-8 KJV) After the fall of Adam and Eve, God drove them out from the garden East of Eden, and commanded the man to work out the land. God gave them children. The first one is Cain which means “Possession”, and after him Abel which means “Breath”. Both of them came to worship God. Cain was after material things and getting possessions but Abel was after God, after life with God and after the Holy Spirit.

After the fall of man, God still was gracious and He made a way still for the man to come and worship Him based on the hope of man on the message of the gospel, that the seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent. ***“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”*** (Genesis 3:15 KJV) The two sons of Adam and Eve, both of them should work out righteousness to bruise the head of the serpent. We may even assume that the presence of worship may indicate the repentance of Adam and Eve, and they are the one who taught their children to come to God, to worship Him, to honour Him, to sacrifice to Him, to serve Him, and to offer to Him what is due for Him. Some had said, that the place where the cross of Jesus was placed, was over the skull of Adam, that when

Jesus blood was shed on the cross sprinkled on the skull of Adam. Let us now ponder and see what a great salvation we have in the blood of Jesus

Now the approach of Abel to God is different from the approach of Cain: ***“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”*** (Hebrews 11:4 KJV) What Abel did by faith: He offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; it was a more full and perfect sacrifice. After the fall, God opened a new way for the children of men to return to Him in religious worship. This is one of the first instances that is recorded of fallen men going to worship God. After the fall, the worship between God and man was not cut off by the fall. God must be worshipped by sacrifices, a way of worship which carries in it a confession of sins, renouncing of sins, and a confession of faith in the Redeemer, who was to be a ransom for the souls of men.

Therefore, from the beginning, there has been a remarkable difference between the worshippers. Here we have two persons, Cain and Abel, who are brethren, both of whom went in to worship God, and yet there was a vast difference. Cain was the elder brother, but Abel the younger has the preference. *It is not seniority of birth, but grace that makes men truly honourable. Many who knew Christ over long period of times and years but they fail to honour him. As well as it is not being born to Christian family, but being born again by the Spirit of God and to be a new creation in Christ will make you honourable, where the old has gone, and the new has come.*

The difference is observable in Cain and Abel: Abel was an upright person, a righteous man, a true believer; Cain was a formalist, a profess Christian but not true born again. We can observe in their principles that Abel acted under the power of faith. He came with joy to worship God. Cain came only from the principle of coming to worship God by force or just following a tradition. *Abel is the good example of true conversion, while Cain is the example of Christian born by birth. Many who are born to Christian families but they are not truly born again.*

There was also a very observable difference in their offerings: Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, a blood of animal to be shed; he brought of the firstlings of the flock, acknowledging himself to be a sinner who deserved to die, therefore he needs a sacrifice, and only hoping for mercy through the great sacrifice of God through Jesus Christ our Lord through God’s promise in ***Genesis 3:15. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”*** (Genesis 3:15 KJV) Therefore Abel offered and sacrificed animal from his flock. Abel trusted in the mercy of God and on His Word, ***“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”*** (Hebrews 9:22 KJV) God also shed blood of animal in ***Genesis 3*** to make clothes of skin to the Adam and to his wife, ***“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”*** (Genesis 3:21 KJV) So shedding of blood for atonement something was known to the man and was initiated by God in Word and in acts.

Cain brought only a sacrifice of acknowledgment, or a mere thank-offering, the fruit of the ground, which might be without confession of sin, and no regard to the ransom; this was an essential defect in Cain's offering. He came to God without recognizing that he needs God and without recognizing that he is a sinner needs repentance and who need a Saviour to have eternal life.

*There will always be a difference between those who worship the true God; some will come to Him with lies and hypocrisy, others will be faithful and sincere like the saints. Some as Cain, like the Pharisee, will depend on their own righteousness; others, as Abel, will confess their sins, and cast themselves upon the mercy of God in Christ.*

What Abel gained by his faith? ***“And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.” (Genesis 4:4-5 KJV)*** God had respect to Abel, and to his offering; first to his person as gracious, then to his offering as proceeding from grace, especially from the grace of faith. *If we want God to respect us, then we need to consider what we are giving him and the motive behind that what we are giving.* Abel's sacrifice considered as a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, ***“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” (Hebrews 11:4 KJV)*** Here in the Scripture we are told that Abel, obtained by his faith in what He did and with what gift He gave to God the following special advantages:

- A Witness that he was righteous, a justified, sanctified, and accepted person before God.
- God gave witness to the righteousness of his person, by testifying his acceptance of his gifts.
- By what he did, Abel, being dead, yet continue to speak. He had the honour to leave behind him an instructive speaking story. *Our testimony in what we are willing to give is not only the good example but the instructive speaking story on our behalf, which will continue, even after our death.*
- Abel commended for what he gave of his first fruit to God. Abel is the first one who is mentioned in the Bible who had given to God. He gave his first fruit, while Abraham the first one in the Bible who gave to God his tithes.

Did Abraham gave his first fruit to God? Yes, he gave by his willingness to offer his only son Isaac, as God told him to do that, ***“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” (Genesis 22:2 KJV)*** See what God told him; we know that Abraham has another son, Ishmael, but now God is not recognizing him, as he asked Abraham previously to send him away with his mother, and now pointing to Abraham to offer his only son Isaac, ***“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac”***, to be his first fruit to God. The Israelites were called to give their first born to God and they gave them to God by redeeming them by a certain amount of money.

- Cain was rejected not because he brought to God fruit from the ground and Abel from the flock, but because he did not bring to God the first of his fruits, while Abel

brought the first fruit of his flock, ***“3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” (Genesis 4:3-4 KJV)*** Cain came just to bring something, but not in his mind repentance, faith and to bring something to honor God with. But Abel was determined to honor God and to put Him first in his life, and indeed God look in respect to the more excellent sacrifice that Abel offered to God.

***My dear and beloved:*** What does it speak to us the life of Abel? What should we learn from what Abel did?

- That fallen man, the sinners, has the chance to go back to worship God, with hope of acceptance after repentance. Therefore, it is righteousness to repent and come back to God.
- If our persons and offerings be accepted, it must be through faith in the Messiah.
- That acceptance with God is a peculiar and distinguishing favour. It is a favour and a privilege that we can come to God and worship him.
- That to honor God is by offering our firstfruits to Him. God through the Passover Lamb save His people when His angel of death pass over Egypt and killed the first born of the Egyptians, but He saved His people and instructed them to give Him their first fruit.
- **Honoring God with the firstfruits is an act of faithfulness and gratitude expressed by giving:** We ought to remember and honor God by bringing back to Him the firstfruits that we have received from Him. True worshipper are true givers; *God would ask you always to give the best that you have with you. It is the requirement of the Lord from us.* ***“1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.” (Exodus 13:1-2 KJV) “12 That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD's. 13 And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.” (Exodus 13:12-13 KJV)*** *God offered His son for us, we accept Christ, and our acceptance to Him, is also to accept that we need to offer our first fruit to God.*

*When we put God first in our lives, then we can give to God what He is asking us to give. But when we put ourselves first, when we put our wives first, when we put our families first, when we put our parents first, when we put our children first, when we put our wishes and the rest first, then we cannot give to God our first fruit.*

*When we are willing to surrender our lives to God, when we are willing to give Him our hearts, our desires and our plans then we can give our first fruit to God.*



- **Honoring God with the firstfruits is commemorating God's mighty work of salvation and deliverance:** God required the dedication of the firstborns and the firstfruits upon the deliverance of His chosen people from bondage and slavery. He stroke the first fruit of the Egyptians, but He spared the first fruit and the first borns of His people in order to offer it for Him, *"36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. 37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes."* (Psalm 105:36-37 KJV) God killed the first born in Egypt, but His people were spared and went out with abundant blessings, and with good health and strength, for no feeble or weak person were among them. *"50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: 52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock."* (Psalms 78:50-52 KJV) The Lord struck the firstborn of the Egyptians, human and animal, but He took out His people victoriously the day that He brought His people out of Egypt. He delivered them victoriously from the hands of those who oppressed them. *"14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: 15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. 16 And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt."* (Exodus 13:14-16 KJV) *The Lord God has saved us, through the work of Messiah on the cross, and as the Lord keeps doing great miracles and wonders in our lives, keeping us healthy, supplying all our needs, and blessing us in every area of our lives, we return to Him the first harvest of all our crops or our first month's whole salary, as a token of our thanksgiving, faithfulness, and acknowledgment of His goodness and wonderful work for having saved us from the bondage of sin and death.*

*Without God's saving grace and without God sustaining us and providing for our daily needs, we are nothing and we can do nothing. Thus giving God the firstfruit is to give our first salary, the first increase, the first income of every business, or the first month's income of every year as submission to God's command.*

*We also need to explain the reason for giving our firstfruits to God to our children and our disciples for we who were once enslaved by sin and were in deep bondage and a slave to our wants and needs, have now been set free by the Lord through the blood of Jesus, the Firstborn from the grave. We all need to grasp the meaning and do what God requires of us so ultimately we will be blessed. "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me."* (Exodus 22:29 KJV)

- *Some who are in tradition when they start to work and earn their living they would give the first salary to their father, for example, by buying a gift equal their first month*

*income and give it to their father. Now how much more, we need to give our first fruit to to our Heavenly Father who created us and who sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to save us.*

- *We are reminded from the life of Abel that we need to bring our first fruit to God. The first fruit was directed to support the priests who supposes to teach the Israelites not to rebel against God and not to do as the Egyptians did in rebelling against God's will. The same also today, the first fruit is to be directed to support the pastor of the church or the church leaders who teach the people the righteousness of God and lead them not to rebel against God. Therefore when the first fruit withhold, or intentionally withhold from being given to the Lord and brought to God's church, then the people are truly non willing to repent from their own way and their worship is similar to Cain and what he offered.*

- *That those who obtain this favour from God must expect the envy and malice of the world. Abel was persecuted and was killed by his own brother, Cain. Persecution and threats and pressures from outside and from those near to us and from those who are false brothers will continue to be against us as we continue to do the righteous thing that God wants us to do.*

- That God will not suffer the injuries done to his people to remain unpunished, nor their sufferings unrewarded. God dealt with Cain as **Genesis 4** informed us. *"10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. 11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; 12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth."* (Genesis 4:10-12 KJV) The blood of Abel cried to God, and was received by the earth. *Now God ordained that the earth that received the blood of Abel will give hard time to Cain in his work in tilling the ground. When the first fruit is withheld the land will not yield its strength to the man.*

- *We need not to bother of how to forgive from our hearts those who hurt us or tried to destroy us, because the Lord our God will deal with those who persecuted us and troubled us while we are marching forward to do the will of God and the righteous things that He wants us to do. He will give a hard land for them to plow the ground, but He will sustain us and will accept what we gave Him of first fruits and will have respect on our lives. We need to continue to give our first fruits to God so the earth will give to us its strength and supply us with the best all the time.*

- God rewarded Abel. God would not suffer Abel's faith to die with him, but would raise up others, who should obtain the same precious faith and what Abel did. Abel died but his story is continually spoken off as God ordained.

- These are very good and useful instructions about Abel's life, but the blood of sprinkling of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel. Jesus is our ultimate example to follow. *"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of*

*sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:24 KJV) Put it in your mind that Abel did not only gave his first fruit to God, but he offered his life and his future in the hand of God. Jesus Gave His life fully to God and He came to do God’s will as we read in Hebrews quoting that from the writer of Psalm 40, “**Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.**” (Hebrews 10:7 KJV) “**7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, 8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. 9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. 10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.**” (Psalm 40:7-10 KJV) Jesus did God’s will, He preached righteousness and lived and manifested righteousness. God wants us to do the same. Now how about you my Brothers and Sisters, are you doing your best to do God’s will? Are are doing your best to fulfill what is in the Scriptures? Are you doing all what you can to let the righteousness of God to be revealed through your life to others?*

**My Prayer:** Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus, who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the death on the third day to give me eternal life.

Lord forgives me my sins \_\_\_\_\_.

*Let us confess and renounce our sins to the Lord. Let us confess and renounce all our pride, our wrong ways of life and our non willingness to follow the ways of God and our wrong priorities.*

*If you have not yet received Christ as Saviour and Lord over your life, then now is the time for you to open your heart and your life to Him and ask Him to come and be the Lord over your heart and your life.*

*Lord I thank you for your Word to me that explains to me that I need to know your righteousness and how to hunger and to thirst after your righteousness. Lord I thank you for the example of Jesus and the example of Abel. Lord I am willing to offer my life fully to you as a living sacrifice, and willing to do what you want me to do and achieve for you: Lord I commit myself to give you my heart, my life and my first fruit to you.*

*Lord I commit my life to be willing to suffer for you and even to be persecuted for your name sake. Lord I commit my life to be set as a good example to others, that they may see you through my life. Lord gives me more fruit of the Holy Spirit so that I can persevere more in obeying your Word.*

*Lord fills me with the Holy Spirit and gives to me the spiritual gifts that I need to evangelize and to make new disciples. Lord protects me and provides all my needs so I can continue to go on and serve you.*

*Lord I pray for my Brothers and Sisters who had humbled themselves before you to learn your righteousness and how to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Lord protects them and provides all their needs. Lord fills them once again with the Holy Spirit and makes their lives testimony attractive to others so that people will believe in you and start to follow you and live according to your Word and your righteousness.*

*Lord I pray for us as a church to help us to go on in serving you and do your work and your will. Lord we commit ourselves to do what is right and just in your eyes. Lord continues to reveal your will to us and your righteousness so we will continue to declare your righteous acts to all the nations and the people around us. Lord transform our lives and fills us once again with the Holy Spirit and enables us to evangelize and to reach new people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and with the Word of God. Lord we pray that you will enable us to plant new Bible studies and new congregations for the church. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus name, Amen.*

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