

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mound Continued

CHAPTER 6

THEME: The inner motives which govern external acts of righteousness, such as the giving of alms, prayer, fasting, and the getting of riches; the relationship of the subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven to God.

THE MOTIVE AND METHOD OF GIVING ALMS

Chapter 6 of Matthew deals with the external part of religion. We have seen in chapter 5 that the King speaks of the righteousness which His subjects must possess. It must be a righteousness to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and that comes only through trust in Christ. In chapter 6 Matthew talks about the righteousness that the subjects of the Kingdom are to practice. The motive, of course, is the important thing in what you do for God. No third party can enter into this relationship. These things are between the soul and God.

The items mentioned in this chapter—the giving of alms, prayer, fasting, money, and taking thought and care for the future—are very practical considerations.

First, our Lord talks about alms. Keep in mind that all of this has to do with externalities of religion or with ostentation in religion. – McGee

Giving to the Needy

Mat 6:1 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Mat 6:2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

He is saying this with biting irony. Believe me, He knew how to use the rapier of sarcasm! When the Pharisees wanted to give something to the poor, it was their custom to go down to a busy street corner in Jerusalem and blow a trumpet. Although the purpose was to call the poor and needy together to receive the gifts, it afforded a fine opportunity to let others see their good works. Do you see parallels today in the way some Christians give? Our Lord said that when the Pharisees do it that way, they have their reward. What was their reward? Well, what was it that they were after? Jesus said they did it to have glory of men. They blew the trumpet, and everybody came running out to see how generously they gave, and that was their reward. Their giving was not between themselves and God.

Now, why do you give? There is more than one way to give. Several years ago I was asked to take an offering in a certain organization. I was told to be sure and give everybody an opportunity to stand up and tell how much he would give. For example, I was instructed to say, "How many will give one hundred dollars?" I asked, "Why in the world do you take an offering like that?" I was told that a certain man would attend who would give only one dollar if a regular offering was taken. However, if the question of how many would give one hundred dollars was asked, he would give that amount. May I say that he blew a trumpet. And I discovered when I came to know this man that this was the way he gave.

There are other people who give large checks but want to hand them to you personally. There was a man in my church who always gave me a check before I went into the pulpit. He thought this would excite me enough so that I would mention it. A friend of his came to me one day and said, "So—and—so is disturbed." He went on to explain that I did not acknowledge the very large check his friend had given me last Sunday. "That's right," I said, and told this man the reason why. "Your friend is a man of means and the check he gave me, in relationship to what he has, wasn't very much. Last Sunday a mail-carrier also handed me an envelope. He didn't want me to open it until after the service and did not want me to say a word to anyone about it. He gave me almost twice as much money as the man of means did. If I were going to acknowledge anybody, it would have to be the mail-carrier—but he didn't want me to do that."

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mound Continued

May I say to you that giving is between you and God, and the very minute you get a third party involved, you don't get any credit in heaven.

There is a lot of so-called Christian giving today that isn't giving at all. For example, the college I graduated from played on human nature. While I was in school, beautiful architectural plans were drawn up for a tower to be put on an old hall. It was modestly announced that the tower would be named after the donor. At least a half dozen people wanted their names on that tower. Today it is called "So-and-so Tower" in honor of a certain man. His name is carved in stone which means that his trumpet is being blown all the time. A lot of people give like that. This kind of giving is worth nothing before God. – McGee

Mat 6:3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Mat 6:4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Don't reach in your pocket with one hand and then put the other hand in the air to let people know how much you are giving! Our Lord is saying that when you put your hand in your pocket to get something to give, be so secretive about it that the other hand doesn't know what you are doing. All of this is biting sarcasm.

Do our liberal friends really live by the Sermon on the Mount? I don't think they do! - McGee

The Lord's Prayer

Mat 6:5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Mat 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

"Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are"—my, our Lord used strong language, didn't He! "They have their reward." They pray so that they may be seen of men. A man might go wearing a prayer shawl, which advertises the fact that he is praying. Jesus said that when a man prays like that, he has his reward. He gets what he wants—that is, to be seen of men. But his prayer never gets above the rafters of the building.

The concept we are dealing with here is revolutionary. Did you notice that the Lord uses the term Father? These are citizens of the Kingdom that the Lord is talking about. How do you become a child of God today? Joh_1:12 gives us the answer: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power [the authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that [do no more or less than] believe on his name." Our Lord even said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again" (see Joh_3:3)—until then, you can't call God your Father. And in the Old Testament you will not find the word Father used in relation to a man with God. The nation Israel as a whole was called by God, "... Israel is my son ..." (Exo_4:22), but not an individual. The Lord Jesus is speaking of a new relationship.

Concerning the subject of prayer, we are told that it should be secret and sincere. Many an unknown saint of God will be revealed at the judgment seat of Christ as a real person of prayer. - McGee

Mat 6:7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Mat 6:8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mound Continued

I heard a fellow pray the other day, and he repeated his petition about a dozen times. The Lord Jesus says that if we ask the Father one time, He hears us.

Prayer should be marked by sincerity and simplicity:

1. Sincerity—Mat_6:6. Go in and close the door—your prayer is between you and God.
2. Simplicity—Mat_6:7. Don't use vain repetition. Get right down to the nitty-gritty and tell the Lord what you have on your mind. “Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” v. Mat_6:8. Even though He already knows what we need, He wants us to come to Him and ask.

Now He gives us a sample prayer—“After this manner therefore pray ye.”

Before we look at this so-called Lord's Prayer, let me say that I never use it in a public service. I don't think that a Sunday morning crowd should get up and pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” when they have a roast in the oven at home—they already have their meal. It is a very meaningful prayer for those who are hungry, but a well-fed Sunday morning congregation ought not to pray this because for them it is vain repetition.

However, it is a wonderful model prayer for believers of all conditions. – McGee

Mat 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

Mat 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

Notice that this so-called Lord's Prayer could not be the prayer of the Lord Jesus. He couldn't pray this prayer. He couldn't join with you and me and say, “Our Father” because the relationship between the Father and the Son is the relationship in deity. It is a position, not a begetting. I became a son of God only through faith in Christ; therefore Christ couldn't join with me in saying, “Our Father.”

“Which art in heaven.” God is not a prisoner in this universe—He is beyond and above it. He is in the air spaces, in the stellar spaces, but He is far removed from His universe today. He is more than creation! He is the One sitting upon the throne of the universe, and He has it under His control!

“Hallowed be thy name,” more correctly translated, would read, “Let thy name be made holy.” The name of God stands for God, for all that God is. In what way can you and I make God's name holy? It is my conviction that by our lives we are to make God's name holy. When Abraham went into Canaan, a Canaanite passing by observed that they had a new neighbor, for he had seen Abraham's altar. Everywhere Abraham went he built an altar to God. And when Abraham began to do business with the Canaanites, they found him to be honest. They found that everything Abraham said invited their confidence. Finally, they reached the conclusion that the God whom Abraham worshiped was a holy God, and Abimelech said to Abraham, “... God is with thee in all that thou doest” (Gen_21:22). The children of Heth said, “... thou art a mighty prince among us ...” (Gen_23:6). The entire life of Abraham revealed the reverence he felt for God. Surely the name of God was made holy in Canaan because of Abraham.

“Thy kingdom come” is the Kingdom about which Matthew has been speaking, the Kingdom which Christ will establish on this earth. This is a worthy petition for all of us to pray. – McGee

Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

As I have indicated, this prayer is a model for our own prayers. Now I want you to notice this petition for a moment. It is a wonderful petition, so simple yet one that should come from our hearts with great enthusiasm. It speaks of our utter

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mound Continued

dependence upon God. Our bodily wants, our physical necessities, all are supplied by Him day by day. “Give us ... our daily bread”—just as Israel gathered manna for the day, they gathered nothing for the morrow. They were not permitted to gather manna for the next week. They could not hoard it. This prayer gathers manna every day, “Give us this day our daily bread.” It shows man that he lives from hand to mouth. It shows man that even his bodily necessities, his basic needs, come from God.- McGee

Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

Our Lord Jesus could not pray this—He had no sin to be forgiven. You see, it is not the Lord's prayer; it is the disciples' prayer.

“Forgive us our debts as we forgive those that are indebted to us” is legalistic; it is not grace. I thank God for another verse of Scripture, Eph_4:32, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” Today God is forgiving us on the basis of what Christ has done for us, not on the basis by which we forgive—as touching the matter of our salvation. The redemption of God is in full view when God forgives us. It does not refer to our salvation when we read, “forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” He is speaking here to those who are already saved, those who already have the nature of God. He does not wait for you to forgive before He forgives. This is not His method of settling the sin question. He gave His Son to die, and it is on this basis that God forgives.

In some churches today where there is formal religion, liturgy, and ritual, they use “forgive us our debts” while others will use “forgive us our trespasses.” Two little girls were talking about the Lord's Prayer as repeated in their churches. One said, “We have trespasses in our church,” and the other said, “Well, in our church we have debts.” (Probably they both were right as far as the churches of our day are concerned—they have both debts and trespasses.) So which phrase is accurate? There is no difficulty here at all since all of these words refer to the same thing, and that thing is sin. - McGee

Mat 6:13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

“Lead us not into temptation.” This word lead gives us the wrong impression because James says God does not tempt any man. That is true—God does not tempt any man. A better translation here would be, “Leave us not in temptation.” It does not mean to keep us out of it, but when we are in it, do not leave us there.

“Deliver us from evil”—this deliverance is from the evil one. Deliver us from the evil one—deliver us from the Devil. Satan is today an awful reality. The world has tried many times to get rid of him. They laughed at Martin Luther who threw an inkwell at him. But recently we have had a turn in events. Any man who stands for God knows the awful reality of Satan. As we work in any church we become conscious of the presence of God and also dreadfully conscious of the presence of Satan. But we have this petition, “Deliver us from the evil one.”

May I say that this is a marvelous prayer for a new believer to pray privately in learning to pray. My own mother was not saved until late in life. She didn't know how to pray, and she began by just repeating the Lord's Prayer. Finally she graduated from this, and she could pray her own prayer.

When we are teaching our children to pray, we begin them with, “Now I lay me down to sleep.” Then one day little Willie adds, “God bless Mama and God bless Papa.” That is a thrilling moment for us, because they are beginning to pray on their own. And our Lord gave the so-called Lord's Prayer as a model. It is a glorious, wonderful prayer, and it shows us what we should include in our own prayers. He would like us to learn to pray in our own words when we talk to Him.

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mound Continued

As the Lord Jesus said in the verses preceding the Lord's Prayer, prayer is not to be done for display. It is a relationship between you and God, and the most effective prayer is when you enter into your closet—that is, a private place. I am not enthusiastic about public prayer meetings because of the fact that the dearest service of any in the church is the prayer meeting. As a pastor, I used to try to build up the prayer meeting, but I soon discovered that if you have fifty dead saints praying, you don't improve it by getting a hundred dead saints. It still is a pretty dead prayer meeting. What we need is a great deal more

private prayer. It should take place between an individual and God. – McGee

Mat 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Mat 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

6:14, 15 This serves as an explanatory footnote to verse 12. It is not part of the prayer, but added to emphasize that the parental forgiveness mentioned in verse 12 is conditional. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Fasting

Mat 6:16 "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Mat 6:17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

Mat 6:18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

6:16 The third form of religious hypocrisy that Jesus denounced was the deliberate attempt to create an appearance of fasting. The hypocrites disfigured their faces when they fasted in order to look gaunt, haggard, and doleful. But Jesus says it is ridiculous to attempt to appear holy.

6:17, 18 True believers should fast in secret, giving no outward appearance of it. To anoint your head and wash your face was a means of appearing in one's normal manner. It is enough that the Father knows; His reward will be better than people's approval. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

Mat 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

Mat 6:20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

A great many folk think that money cannot be used in a spiritual way and that when you talk about money, you are talking about something that is only material. However, our Lord says that we are to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven. How can we do that? Well, instead of putting it in a bank in Switzerland, put it in heaven by giving it to the Lord's work down here—but make sure it is in the Lord's work. You ought to investigate everything you give to. Make sure that you are giving to that which will accumulate treasure for you in heaven. If it is used for the propagation of the gospel and to get out the Word of God, it becomes legal tender in heaven, and that is how we gather treasure in heaven.

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mound Continued

Perhaps you are saying, “But I don't give for that reason.” You ought to, because our Lord said, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” That is a laudable motive for giving. And He gives the reason: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” If you get enough treasure laid up in heaven, you are certainly going to think a lot about heaven. But if it is in the bank, your thoughts are going to be on the bank. There is an ever-present danger of worshipping mammon rather than God. – McGee

Mat 6:22 *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.*

Mat 6:23 *But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

Jesus realized that it would be difficult for His followers to see how His unconventional teaching on security for the future could possibly work. So He used an analogy of the human eye to teach a lesson on spiritual sight. He said that the eye is the lamp of the body. It is through the eye that the body receives illumination and can see. If the eye is good, the whole body is flooded with light. But if the eye is bad, then vision is impaired. Instead of light, there is darkness.

The application is this: The good eye belongs to the person whose motives are pure, who has a single desire for God's interests, and who is willing to accept Christ's teachings literally. His whole life is flooded with light. He believes Jesus' words, he forsakes earthly riches, he lays up treasures in heaven, and he knows that this is the only true security. On the other hand, the bad eye belongs to the person who is trying to live for two worlds. He doesn't want to let go of his earthly treasures, yet he wants treasures in heaven too. The teachings of Jesus seems impractical and impossible to him. He lacks clear guidance since he is full of darkness.

Jesus adds the statement that if therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! In other words, if you know that Christ forbids trusting earthly treasures for security, yet you do it anyway, then the teaching you have failed to obey becomes darkness—a very intense form of spiritual blindness. You cannot see riches in their true perspective. – Believers Bible Commentary

Mat 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

The impossibility of living for God and for money is stated here in terms of masters and slaves. No one can serve two masters. One will inevitably take precedence in his loyalty and obedience. So it is with God and mammon. They present rival claims and a choice must be made. Either we must put God first and reject the rule of materialism or we must live for temporal things and refuse God's claim on our lives. – Believers Bible Commentary

Do Not Be Anxious

Mat 6:25 *"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"*

Mat 6:26 *Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"*

Birds cannot sow. Birds cannot reap. Birds cannot gather anything into barns, but you and I can. We are to sow, reap, and gather with the same abandon that a little bird has. The little bird is trusting God to take care of him, and we are to trust Him, also. “Are ye not much better than they?” This does not mean that we shouldn't exercise judgment, because God has given us this ability. Once a Christian asked me, “Do you think a Christian ought to have insurance?” My reply was,

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mound Continued

“Yes!” Insurance is one means we have today to put our minds at ease concerning the care of our families and ourselves. The important thing is that we are not to go through life with material things becoming a burden to us. - McGee

Mat 6:27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

Worry about the future is not only a dishonor to God—it is also futile. The Lord demonstrates this with a question: “Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?” A short person cannot worry himself eighteen inches taller. Yet, relatively speaking, it would be far easier to perform this feat than to worry into existence all the provisions for one's future needs. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Mat 6:28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

Mat 6:29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Mat 6:30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Next the Lord deals with the unreasonableness of worrying that we will not have enough clothing in the future. The lilies of the field (probably wild anemones) neither toil nor spin, yet their beauty surpasses that of Solomon's royal garments. If God can provide such elegant apparel for wildflowers, which have a brief existence and are then used as fuel in the baking oven, He will certainly care for His people who worship and serve Him. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Mat 6:31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

Mat 6:32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

6:31, 32 The conclusion is that we should not spend our lives in anxious pursuit of food, drink, and clothing for the future. The unconverted Gentiles live for the mad accumulation of material things, as if food and clothing were the whole of life. But it should not be so with Christians, who have a heavenly Father who knows their basic needs.

If Christians were to set before them the goal of providing in advance for all their future needs, then their time and energy would have to be devoted to the accumulation of financial reserves. They could never be sure that they had saved enough, because there is always the danger of market collapse, inflation, catastrophe, prolonged illness, paralyzing accident. This means that God would be robbed of the service of His people. The real purpose for which they were created and converted would be missed. Men and women bearing the divine image would be living for an uncertain future on this earth when they should be living with eternity's values in view. – Believers Bible Commentary

Mat 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Mat 6:34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

6:33 The Lord, therefore, makes a covenant with His followers. He says, in effect, “If you will put God's interests first in your life, I will guarantee your future needs. If you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then I will see that you never lack the necessities of life.”

6:34 This is God's “social security” program. The believer's responsibility is to live for the Lord, trusting God for the future with unshakable confidence that He will provide. One's job is simply a means of providing for current needs; everything above this is invested in the work of the Lord. We are called to live one day at a time: tomorrow can worry about its own things. – Believers Bible Commentary

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mound Continued

EXCURSUS ON FASTING

To fast is to abstain from gratifying any physical appetite. It may be voluntary, as in this passage, or involuntary (as in Act_27:33 or 2Co_11:27). In the NT it is associated with mourning (Mat_9:14-15) and prayer (Luk_2:37; Act_14:23). In these passages fasting accompanied prayer as an acknowledgment of one's earnestness in discerning the will of God.

Fasting has no merit as far as salvation is concerned; neither does it give a Christian special standing before God. A Pharisee once boasted that he fasted twice a week; however, it failed to bring him the justification he sought (Luk_18:12, Luk_18:14). But when a Christian fasts secretly as a spiritual exercise, God sees and rewards. While not commanded in the NT, it is encouraged by promise of reward. It can aid in one's prayer life by taking away dullness and drowsiness. It is valuable in times of crisis when one wishes to discern the will of God. And it is of value in promoting self-discipline. Fasting is a matter between an individual and God and should be done only with a desire to please Him. It loses its value when it is imposed from outside or displayed from a wrong motive. – Believers' Bible Commentary