

Matthew

Chapter 6

By

Don Stewart

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MATTHEW CHAPTER 6

The Sermon on the Mount continues with Jesus speaking about true righteousness, prayer, fasting, wealth and worrying.

THE PROPER WAY OF GIVING (6:1-4)

Jesus now speaks of the correct way of practicing out righteous deeds. We are to do them privately to be seen by the Father, not publicly to be seen by men.

Matt. 6:1 Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before people, in order to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *acts of righteousness* many manuscripts read *almsgiving*. A few manuscripts have *gifts*.

Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness These are deeds consisting of righteousness.

before people, in order to be seen by them We are never to “show off” our spirituality to gain approval from people.

Otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. God will not reward this type of behavior.

Matt. 6:2 Therefore when you do almsgiving, do not sound a trumpet before you, just as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they might be praised by others. Truly I say to you, that they have received their reward in full.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Sinaiticus*) have *Truly, truly*.

Therefore when you do almsgiving, These are merciful deeds.

do not sound a trumpet before you, This was a religious duty not an option in Judaism (cf. Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Psalm 112:9). We are to give generously but not conspicuously.

just as the hypocrites do This is a favorite term in Matthew. The term originally meant actor and the idea is similar here.

in the synagogues and in the streets, There is evidence that certain people made it a point to go their deeds in public.

that they might be praised by others. This was their purpose.

Truly I say to you, that they have received their reward in full. In doing your spiritual duties you are *not* performing in front of an audience! Hence Jesus is stressing sincerity of our actions.

Matt. 6:3 But you, when you are doing your almsgiving, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

But you, when you are doing your almsgiving, *You* is emphasized in Greek.

do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. In contrast to the hypocrites, do your almsgiving in secret.

Matt. 6:4 that your almsgiving may be done in secret; then your Father who sees in secret, will reward you.

Note on variant readings. Some manuscripts have the word *himself* after *your Father*. After *will reward you* some manuscripts have the Greek phrase translated *openly* or *in the open*.

that your almsgiving may be done in secret; We are to be just the opposite of hypocrites.

then your Father who sees in secret, We do it so only God can see our deeds.

will reward you. There is not an earned payment for our service, but a disproportionate return based on God's grace. This reward is not from men but from God. It is *His* reward we are working for. The stress here is on the source of the reward in comparison to the hypocrites.

JESUS ON PRAYER (6:5-15)

The Lord teaches His disciples how to pray and what to ask for.

Matt. 6:5 And when you pray, you will not be like the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen by others; truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full.

Note on variant readings: One Syriac manuscript does not have this verse. The majority of manuscripts have *you* in the singular not the plural (*you pray, you will not*). A great majority of the manuscripts have *that* after *to you*.

And when you pray, The subject now moves to prayer.

you will not be like the hypocrites; The structure is similar to verses 3 and 4 with the same key words.

for they love to pray standing in the synagogues They love to do this.

and in the corners of the streets, Those who strictly observed the afternoon hour of prayer could deliberately time his movements to bring him to the most public place at the appropriate time!

that they might be seen by others; truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full. Being viewed by men was their reward.

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

Note on a variant reading: The same variant as verse four. After *will reward you* some manuscripts have the Greek phrase translated *openly* or *in the open*.

But you, when you pray, In contrast to the hypocrites

go into your inner room, The disciple is to pray in the inner room.

and when you have shut your door, We are to pray privately to God.

pray to your Father who is in secret; We are to pray in secret to the one who sees us in secret.

and your Father, the one who sees in the secret, will reward you. The reward comes from the One who sees us pray secretly..

Matt. 6:7 And when you pray, do not keep on using empty repetition, as the Gentiles, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *Gentiles* a couple of manuscripts (including *Vaticanus*) have *hypocrites*.

And when you pray, Now He will further expand on prayer

do not keep on using empty repetition, It is not repetition that He is warning against but rather *empty* repetition.

as the Gentiles, These verses are relevant to the Gentiles much more than to the hypocrites.

for they think they will be heard because of their many words. They attempt to manipulate God through their vain repeating of phrases. All of it is babbling.

Matt. 6:8 Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

Note on a variant reading: *Codex Vaticanus*, along with two other manuscripts, reads *God your Father*. Other manuscripts read *your Father in heaven*. Instead of the reading *your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him*, two Latin manuscripts read *before you open your mouth*.

Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. Prayer is not for the purpose of manipulating God.

Matt. 6:9 Therefore, you yourselves pray in this manner: ‘Our Father, the one who is heaven, set apart your holy Name.

Therefore, you yourselves pray in this manner: ‘Our Father, the one who is heaven, The so-called “Lords prayer,” This same prayer occurs in a shorter form in Luke. It is a prayer for disciples who alone can call God “Father.” The real “Lords prayer is found in John 17.

set apart your holy Name. The relationship between *name* and *person* is much closer in Hebraic thought than for us today. The name of God is virtually indistinguishable from the person of God (cf. Malachi 1:6; Isaiah 29:23; Ezekiel 36:23; John 12:28; 17:6). Thus God is called apart to vindicate Himself.

Matt. 6:10 Let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth, as in heaven.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have the word *as*.

Let your kingdom come, Refers to the future rule of God and the consummation of His purposes in history (cf. Acts 1:6).

let your will be done We are to have the mind of God in prayer.

on earth, Let the things of earth reflect the things in heaven.

as in heaven. Jesus is contrasting the two worlds—the earthly and the heavenly.

Matt. 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Note on a variant reading: Because of the uncertain meaning of the word translated *daily* several variants have arisen. These include *perpetual*, *necessary*

Give us today This is our request to God.

our daily bread. The meaning of this word translated “daily bread” is uncertain. The possibilities include:

- (1) Bread for the day in question, or daily. This is reminiscent of the daily provision of manna in the wilderness.
- (2) Bread necessary for survival (cf. Proverbs 30:8)—a daily ration.
- (3) Bread for the coming day.

Matt. 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven the ones who owe us.

Note on variant readings: The early Christian document *The Didache* (the teaching of the twelve) has *the debt* (singular) as opposed to *our debts* (plural). Origen , the early Church Father, has *the trespasses*. Many manuscripts read *as we forgive* while others read *as we have forgiven*.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven the ones who owe us. The concept of sin as a “debt owed to God” has an Aramaic background (in the rabbinical literature *Hoba*, sin is construed as a debt).

The Bible gives us many reasons why we should forgive others. They include:

1. Christ has provided the example for us of unlimited forgiveness (Luke 23:34; John 13:12-15; Ephesians 4:32; 5:1,2; Colossians 3:13). As He has forgiven us, so we should forgive others.
2. God commands us to forgive others. Vengeance is not our job, it belongs to Him (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19).
3. Jesus taught us that we cannot be forgiven unless we are willing to forgive others.
4. The person who has sinned needs our help for restoration. We need to love him and forgive him (Romans 13:8).
5. When we attempt to extract some type of revenge from people, we then exert our efforts into the work of the flesh, not the Spirit. Thus we are not being controlled by the Spirit as the Scripture commands (Ephesians 5:18).
6. Our lives should be spent looking after the needs of others, not our own needs (Philippians 2:2). God has promised to meet all our needs (Philippians 4:19). When we have been wronged, we need to trust God to deal with our situation and we should pray for that person who has sinned against us.
7. The Bible tells us to look forward, not behind (Philippians 2:13). The past should be kept in the past.
8. When we forgive others God will then grant us peace of mind and of heart. This peace passes all human understanding (Philippians 4:7,9).
9. God will be glorified when we forgive others for Christ’s sake. His glorification should be the aim of all of our conduct (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Matt. 6:13 And do not ever lead us into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

Note on variant readings: The memorable phrase *for yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. amen* is found in many manuscripts. A few manuscripts have *for yours is the kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. amen*. Two manuscripts simply read *amen* after *the evil one*.

And do not ever lead us into temptation, Does God lead believers into temptation?

but rescue us from the evil one. This can refer to evil in general or “the evil one” specifically the devil.

Matt. 6:14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Father in heaven will forgive you.

Note on variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have *for*. Some manuscripts read *your trespasses after will forgive you*.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, If for the sake of argument. Lets assume that you do forgive men their trespasses.

your Father in heaven will forgive you. This is not teaching salvation by works.

Matt. 6:15 But if you don't forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses.

Note on a variant reading: Many manuscripts have the phrase *their trespasses* after *If you don't forgive men*.

But if you don't forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses. We must have a heart to forgive and forget.

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT FASTING (6:16-18)

Contrary to the hypocrites, believers are to fast so only God will know that they are fasting.

Matt. 6:16 Moreover, when you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so they might appear to people fasting; truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full.

Note on variant readings: Instead of *as* many manuscripts read *just as*. Instead of *their faces* *Codex Vaticanus* reads *their own*. Before *they have* many manuscripts read *that*.

Moreover, when you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites, Fasting was an important element in Jewish religious life (i.e. Day of Atonement). Strict Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12) and made sure others knew it.

for they disfigure their faces Literally "make invisible." Making it unrecognizable by covering the head or smearing with ash and dirt.

so they might appear to people fasting; Done for the benefit of men, not God.

truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full. If something is done for the benefit of men then their reward will come from men.

Matt. 6:17 But you, when you fast, put oil your head, and wash your face,

But you, when you fast, Again the disciple will be contrasted to the hypocrite.

put oil your head, and wash your face, Do not look like you are fasting.

Matt. 6:18 so that you do not appear to people to be fasting, but to your Father the one who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Note on a variant reading. The same variant as verses four and six. After *will reward you* some manuscripts have the Greek phrase translated *openly* or *in the open*.

so that you do not appear to people to be fasting, The disciple who fasts should appear normal.

but to your Father the one who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Jesus assumes that fasting will continue among His disciples (see Acts 13:2,3; 14:23 for fasting in the early church). Fasting, however, is never commanded to the New Testament church.

THE DEFINITION OF GENUINE RICHES (6:19-21)

Jesus describes what real riches are. They are not something here on earth that can perish but in heaven where riches can never perish.

Matt. 6:19 Do not treasure for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

Do not treasure for yourselves treasures upon the earth, The disciples attitude toward material possessions

where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. Earthly possessions can be stolen or destroyed. There is *no* permanent security for treasures here on the earth. Treasures in the ancient world were often buried under the house floors, as archaeologists have repeatedly discovered.

Matt. 6:20 But treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not break in or steal.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *or steal* a few manuscripts read *and steal*.

But treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven, Contrast between heavenly and earthly reward.

where neither moth nor rust destroy, and where thieves do not break in or steal. There are permanent treasures in heaven.

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

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts do not have *your* before *treasure* and before *heart*. *Codex Vaticanus* along with a few Egyptian manuscripts do not have *also*.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. It is not so much the disciples wealth that Jesus is concerned with, but rather their loyalty.

LIGHT THROUGH THE EYES (6:22-24)

Jesus emphasizes that we are to let light in through our eyes, not darkness. A true disciple has no room for darkness.

Matt. 6:22 The light of the body is the eye. So if your eye is healthy, your entire body will be full of light.

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts do not have *so*.

The light of the body is the eye. The eye is the window which lets light in.

So if your eye is healthy, your entire body will be full of light. This difficult saying reinforces what has previously been said. Jesus contrasts light and darkness.

Matt. 6:23 But if your eye is unhealthy, then your entire body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

But if your eye is unhealthy, then your entire body will be full of darkness.

If therefore the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! The “evil eye” of Near Eastern cultures is an eye that covets what belongs to another, a greedy eye.

Matt. 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and mammon.

Note on a variant reading: Instead of *No one* a few manuscripts read *no household servant*.

No one can serve two masters; This is a proverbial truth.

for either he will hate the one Hate is misleading since the Jewish idiom of loving and hating intends to express a matter of absolute versus partial commitment. The use of hate is clear from the passage such as Luke 14:26. This does not refer to hatred as we understand the word but is only an emphatic way of referring to the absolute commitment required in discipleship. Hate thus equal “love less than” as can be clearly seen from the parallel in Matthew 10:37. This idiom is already found in the Old Testament (compare Genesis 29:31,33 with 29:30; in Deuteronomy 21:15 the NSRV “disliked” is literally “hated”).

and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one literally “to be a slave of.”

and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and mammon. Aramaic term for possessions. It is a neutral term. Possessions can be either good or evil depending upon how they are used.

The issue in these passages is not wealth primarily, but rather absolute and unqualified discipleship. Wealth is only the most obvious example of what can distract believers from following Jesus. It is only the most unique individuals who can possess a great deal of the world’s wealth without becoming enslaved to it. The real issue is where the heart lies. There is no absolute requirement here for poverty (as some have understood this passage). Anyone who is distracted from unqualified discipleship because of a covetous eye exists in deep darkness. The nature of discipleship is such as that it allows *no divided loyalties*. It is impossible to be a partially committed or part-time disciple.

THE FUTILITY OF WORRY (6:25-34)

Jesus provides examples as to why the believer should not worry.

Matt. 6:25 Because of this I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or what you will drink,] or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing, is it not?

Note on a variant reading. The phrase *or what you will drink* is lacking in some manuscripts.

Because of this I say to you, do not worry about your life, We are not to worry about our existence.

what you will eat [or what you will drink,] or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing, is it not? The remainder of the chapter deals with anxiety. We should not be anxious for anything.

Matt. 6:26 Consider the birds of the heaven, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. You yourselves are more valuable than them are you not?

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (including *Codex Sinaiticus*) have *the* before *barns*.

Consider the birds of the heaven, Jesus gives another simple example from nature.

that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. The birds are taken care of.

You yourselves are more valuable than them are you not? How much more valuable than birds are humans? We have been made in God's image.

Matt. 6:27 And who among you by worrying is able to add one single hour to his life?

And who among you by worrying is able to add one single hour to his life? Worrying does add any time to your life span. It even may shorten it.

Matt. 6:28 And why are you worrying concerning clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they do not labor or spin

And why are you worrying concerning clothing? The illustration is now about clothing.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they do not labor or spin Jesus probably pointed to these flowers as He was giving this illustration.

Matt. 6:29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these.

yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these. Even Solomon did not have their covering

Matt. 6:30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which exists today and tomorrow it is cast into the oven, will he not much more for you—O ones of little faith?

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which exists today and tomorrow it is cast into the oven, will he not much more for you—O ones of little faith? God promises to take care of us.

Matt. 6:31 Therefore do not worry saying, ‘What you will eat?’ or ‘What you will drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’

Therefore do not worry saying, ‘What you will eat?’ or ‘What you will drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ These questions should not be asked by His disciples.

Matt. 6:32 For all these things the Gentiles are striving after. For your Father in heaven knows that you need of all these things.

all these things the Gentiles are striving after. The Gentiles were primarily concerned about material needs. Here the word is not so much a racial but religious distinction as in 5:47.

For your Father in heaven knows that you need of all these things. God knows all our needs.

Matt. 6:33 But be seeking first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given unto you as well

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts do not have the phrase *of God*. Clement, the early church Father, has *kingdom of heaven*.

But be seeking first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, We are to continually seek the things of the kingdom of God.

and all these things will be given unto you as well. Climax of vs. 25 ff. Instead of emphasizing the negative Jesus sets out the positive attitude required of disciples. Without this attitude disciples will be subject to anxiety.

Matt. 6:34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. God will deal with trouble when the time comes (James 4:13-15).

This passage, like the preceding one, stresses the importance of undistracted discipleship. The key to avoiding anxiety is to make the kingdom “one’s priority.” The disciples have a heavenly Father who knows their ongoing needs and who will supply them. If He takes care of His creation, He will surely take care of those who participate in His kingdom. This passage does not mean that food, drink, clothing, and other such necessities will come to the disciples automatically without work or foresight. It address only the

problem of anxiety about these things. Anxiety and worry need not govern the disciple who has known the grace of the kingdom.

SUMMARY TO CHAPTER 6

Chapter six continues the Sermon on the Mount by stressing true devotion to God is something that is done inwardly, not merely on the outside.

In the first section, (1-18), Jesus stresses secretly giving to God, praying to God, and fasting before God so that He is the only One who knows we are doing it. Our secret devotion will be rewarded by God publicly. Therefore we are not to seek the admiration and attention of others. Therefore Jesus teaches us how to give, how to pray and how to fast.

Furthermore, unlimited trust in God is incompatible with worry about riches or any of our basic daily needs as the next section, (19-34), emphasizes. God has promised to take care of His own. We are more valuable than the grass or the birds and yet God magnificently takes care of them. So why do we worry?