MATTHEW 6

In chapter 6, Jesus teaches His listeners not to live for the fickle praise and reward of men. Instead, they should entrust their reward to the eternal security found in God.

READ MATTHEW 6:1-4

* Beware of participating in religion to receive the accolades of other human beings.
	+ As with any pursuit, personal ambition for personal glory can fuel religious devotion.
	+ We can participate in good works to be admired by others
	+ But if we follow Christ to point people to ourselves, something is wrong!
		- God will not reward a person like this
		- The praise of men will be the extent of their reward.
	+ Again, we see that a man or women’s external actions are not God’s main point of interest. He wants their heart.
	+ It’s a pretty sad thing to devote your heart to the cheap affirmation of men when a God of infinite means stands ready to reward you beyond your imagination.
* There were those in Jesus’ day, as today, who couldn’t do a good deed without letting everyone around them know what they were about to do.
	+ They practically got out a trumpet to announce their righteousness for everyone’s observation.
	+ Jesus calls those who did good deeds designed to attract the praise of men hypocrites.
	+ Our deeds are to be done in a way that God receives the glory (Matt 5:16)
	+ APPLICATION:
		- We are probably all tempted to read this text and say, “I know a person like this!”
		- But before we do that, let’s ask ourselves, “Am I a person like this?”
* When we do a good deed, like giving to the needy (verse 3), we are not to let our left and know what our right hand is doing.
	+ Obviously, it isn’t possible to trick your brain in this way.
	+ What Jesus is saying is that even when one part of you is properly motivated to perform a good deed so that God is praised, another part of you will still crave that glory for yourself.
	+ It is a continual battle and we must be on guard, even against our self.
* Good works should be done subtly and quietly and the God who sees all things will be faithful in the reward.

READ MATTHEW 6:5-8

* Jesus then moves on to a discussion of prayer.
* The same principle from verses 2-4 must be applied to our prayers.
	+ Prayer is not a show we put on for other people
	+ If we pray, pretending to address God, but really intending to communicate a message about our righteousness to men, we become hypocrites
	+ Prayer is intended to be between us and God
		- In prayer we express praise, thanksgiving, and our needs.
		- God will hear those who don’t abuse prayer as a means of communicating their own self-righteousness
* Jesus also condemns the practice of heaping “up empty phrases as the Gentiles do.”
	+ Jesus was probably referring to prayers offered to pagan god’s.
	+ These prayers may have included significant repetition or special “magic words” that had to be spoken in order for the gods to hear them.
		- Jesus’ teaching here would apply to any vain phrase that roles off our lips but has no genuine root in our hearts.
		- It is very easy to fall prey to the vain phrase, especially when praying in public.
	+ God has more interest in genuine prayers than eloquent prayers
	+ This is especially true because God already knows the things we need before we ask Him.
* SIDE STUDY:
	+ Why do we pray if God already knows what we need?
	+ Check out the video “*Why Pray if God Already Knows What I Need?*” on 2BeLikeChrist’s YouTube Channel.

READ MATTHEW 6:9-15

* Great teachers don’t just tell you how not to do something, they teach you how to do it correctly.
* Jesus has just told His disciples how not to pray and now He is going to tell them how to pray.
* He does this by giving an example prayer
	+ “*Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name*”
		- Hallowed: “make holy, consecrated”
		- This is a statement of praise and worship, acknowledging God’s greatness
	+ “*Your Kingdom come*”
		- The Bible uses the term “kingdom” in at least two different way.
			* 1. The Kingdom came to the earth on the Day of Pentecost in the form of the Church. People can enter the Kingdom today (see Col 1:13)
			* 2. The Kingdom is the heavenly reward of all Christians. It is a place we are going after this life (see 2Tim 4:18)
		- Jesus could have been instructing His followers to pray for the coming of the Kingdom in either of the senses above.
		- I tend to think He was instructing them to pray for the Kingdom in the 1st sense (as the Church)
		- How do we apply this today?
			* Today, we can’t pray for the coming of the Kingdom in the 1st sense. The Church is already here.
			* But we can pray for the coming of the Kingdom in the 2nd sense. We can pray for the return of Jesus and the opening of the doors to the Kingdom for all the faithful (see John’s prayer/statement in Rev 22:20).
	+ “*your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*”
		- We ought to acknowledge in prayer that God’s will is superior to ours.
		- We approach Him in humility and trust, conceding that we need His help.
		- God is aware of all people, events, influences, cause and effects that impact the world.
		- He can account for all variables and all decisions and knows the best way to arrange His chess board to accomplish His will.
		- We are but a tiny piece of many and we would be unwise to believe ourselves capable of picking a better square in which to be played than the one chosen by God.
	+ “*Give us this day our daily bread”*
		- Although most of us would say we rely on God for our daily needs, most of us don’t live like it.
		- Many believe their food is secured by their well paying job and their hard work.
			* When is the last time you asked God to give you something to eat?
			* Do we really believe the only reason we have money to go to the grocery store or the reason there is a grocery store at all is because God permits it?
			* Do we believe our ability to feed ourselves could be taken away from us?
				+ We should!
				+ Natural disasters, global epidemics, and crashed economies have made this the reality of many once prosperous nations
		- A godly man or women will remind themselves daily of their lack of sovereignty and ask God to give them what they cannot guarantee for themselves (which is everything).
	+ “*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*”
		- Let’s tie verses 12 and 14-15 together because they both speak to the issue of forgiveness.
		- Are you able to pray the words of verse 12?
			* What if God’s forgiveness was benchmarked on the way you’ve forgiven others?
			* Would God be a very forgiving God?
		- Both verses tie our forgiveness with the way we forgive others
		- A person who is not willing to forgive a fellow human is a person who either:
			* 1. Doesn’t understand the wickedness of their own sin
			* 2. Doesn’t know the value of Christ’s sacrifice
			* Probably both!
		- A man who genuinely knows Christ and the fate Christ has saved him from through grace, will always be capable of forgiving another!
		- A man who refuses to forgive another doesn’t know Christ and therefore will not have Him as the atonement for his own sins
		- Our perspective is grossly distorted if we believe we’ve been too wrongfully treated by another to forgive them, but haven’t treated God wrongly enough to be forgiven.

READ MATTHEW 6:16-18

* Fasting was common practice for many Jews in the first century. Some Jews participated in fasting once or even twice a week.
* Fasting was commanded in the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement but additional fasting was practiced as religious devotion.
* Apparently, some Jews were using their fasting as a way to direct attention to themselves.
	+ They would make themselves look pitiful
	+ Make it obvious as possible to people they were suffering in their godly devotion
	+ These people weren’t fasting to grow closer to God, they wanted to be admired by men for their self-discipline
	+ Jesus condemned them for their hypocrisy
* Jesus instructs the faster to conceal their fasting from the eyes of others
	+ Ideally, no one should know if a person was or was not fasting
	+ It was only important for God to know if a person was fasting
	+ Fasting done in secret would be noticed and rewarded by God.
* Although Jesus mentions prayer and fasting in these verses, this principle applies to any work in which we participate.

MATTHEW 6:19-24

* Those who invest themselves in efforts to court the praise of men store up treasure in a bank next to a time bomb.
	+ Sure, that bank will keep your treasure safe for a while, until it blows up.
	+ We are all given a limited time to live on the earth and when that time is up, if our treasure is stored here on earth, it will all be gone and worthless to us.
	+ In contrast, a person who treasures God and His promises will not have their investments affected when their time runs out. They will receive a marvelous return on their portfolio.
* “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”
	+ If you can discover where a person invest their time, money, brainpower, there at the top of all he has built, you will find his heart.
		- The heart is supported on the foundation of a person’s treasure and is dependent on that support to survive.
		- If the treasure collapses, the person whose heart it supports will be destroyed.
		- A person’s worth and meaning in life can be identified by observing the deepest affections of his heart.
	+ This is how we know the heart of the Pharisees and Sadducees didn’t belong to God.
		- If there heart had belonged to God, it could have accepted a Messiah who didn’t look the way they expected because it would have recognized God knew best.
		- Instead, they violently opposed the Messiah because His appearance threatened the foundation of all they held dear, their position and influence.
* I find verses 22-23 difficult to understand if not kept in context with the previous verses.
	+ Our heart is a guide.
		- It can lead us to lay up treasures on the earth and endanger us.
		- Or it can lead us to lay up treasure in heaven and safeguard us.
	+ In a more literal sense, our eyes are a guide.
		- If our physical eyes are healthy they are filled with the light of the sun.
		- If we spiritual eyes are healthy they are filled with the light of Christ.
		- If our physical eyes are unhealthy they are blind and in darkness.
		- If our spiritual eyes are unhealthy they are blind to the light of Christ and in darkness.
			* 1Jn 1:5 - This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.
		- We walk based on the light or darkness within us.
* In the same way we cannot store up treasures on earth and in heaven or walk in the light and in the dark we cannot serve two masters.
	+ Like a person who tries to have two jobs that overlap each other, at some point, the person must decide their priority.
	+ Or like a person who tries to date two people, eventually you’re going to run into some serious issues.
	+ We must either devote ourselves to God or to the world.
	+ In this case, the contradiction between the two parties is even stronger than the examples listed above.
	+ God is 100% opposed to Satan’s work and Satan is 100% opposed to God’s work.
	+ As was mentioned in 1Jn 1:5-6, you either serve God in the light or you serve the darkness. If you try to overlap the two, you’re a liar and genuinely belong to the darkness.

READ MATTHEW 6:25-30

* Jesus’ uses therefore to call to mind what He just said to them.
	+ In light of the fact that we don’t serve money… don’t be anxious!
	+ Don’t be anxious about food and clothing.
* But wait, wouldn’t that statement make more sense if it was reversed?
	+ We need money to buy food.
	+ We need money to buy clothing.
	+ Shouldn’t it say, “sense your such a hard worker, you’ll earn lots of money, therefore you shouldn’t worry about food and clothing”?
* This is the way most of us think. My effort/work ensure my necessities!
* WRONG!
	+ There is something bigger going on here that we would be wiser to concern ourselves with.
	+ “Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”
* Jesus is about to prove that type of thinking is wrong.
* He points His listeners to the birds in the air and the lilies in the field.
	+ Birds and lilies aren’t servants of money.
	+ They are servants of God and they are cared for by God.
	+ They don’t have jobs and they don’t have bank accounts!
		- Shouldn’t they be worried about their necessities?
		- No!
		- They serve a master much more trustworthy than money.
	+ The birds don’t die of starvation
	+ Have you ever seen a bird and thought, “Wow that bird looks like its about to die of starvation!”
	+ The lilies bloom in the field every year in the same beautiful glory.
	+ Are we not much more treasured by God than the birds and lilies?
	+ Did God send His son to die for the lilies?
	+ Does God call the birds His children?
	+ If they are not anxious about tomorrow, how much less should a son/daughter of God fear the future?
* What benefit does being anxious bring you?
	+ Have you ever accomplished anything by fretting about it?
	+ How often do we concern ourselves with circumstances out of our control?
	+ Serve a God who has every circumstance under control and cast your anxieties on Him.

READ MATTHEW 6:31-34

* Jesus asks His listeners if they have less faith than the birds and the lilies?
	+ They don’t ask the questions in verse 31.
	+ Will our anxiety reveal our faith to be weaker than a birds?
	+ Or our trust in our God less than the trust an unbeliever (Gentile) has in his master (money, 6:24).
* Money neither knows nor cares about your needs.
* God knows and cares about the things you need.
	+ Don’t lay up treasure on earth (verse 19)
	+ Lay up treasure in heaven (verse 20)
	+ Don’t allow the darkness to fill you (verse 23)
	+ Be filled with the light (verse 22)
	+ Don’t serve money (verse 24)
	+ Serve God (verse 24)
	+ Seek the Kingdom of God above all and the King of Heaven will care for you better than any other master!
* Verse 34 is vitally important (not that every verse in the Bible isn’t.
	+ Anxiety creeps into our lives when we evaluate the resources we have today and try to apply them to the circumstances we will encounter tomorrow.
	+ But tomorrows problems aren’t meant to be faced with today’s resources.
	+ God’s mercies are new every morning and the strength to face the day will be granted, even if it doesn’t arrive until just the right time.

APPLICATION:

When you pray publicly do you use phrases designed for the ears of men more than the ears of God?

https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/fasting-and-fast-days