

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

JESUS IS KING



Doing Good for God not for Men

Text: Matthew 6:1-18

1. Doing good not to be seen by others. - Matthew 6:1

Alms is actually the word *righteousness*. Jesus tells us to not do righteous things for the sake of display or image (**to be seen by them**).

Jesus has just clearly shown God's righteous standard; perhaps He foresaw the thought "Wouldn't everybody be impressed if I was like that?"

So here Jesus addressed the danger of creating an *image* of righteousness. It is almost impossible to do spiritual things in front of others without thinking what their opinion is of us as we do those things.

This also does not contradict His previous command to *let your light so shine before men* (Matthew 5:16). Although Christians are to be seen doing good works, they must not do good works *simply* to be seen.

Jesus begins to deal with three spiritual disciplines: giving, prayer, and fasting.

2. Giving the Right Way. - Matthew 6:2-4

It was a custom for some in Jesus' day to draw attention to their giving so they would be known as generous. They would literally blow a trumpet! Can you imagine that?

Today, people do not **sound a trumpet** to project the image of generosity, but they still know how to call attention to their giving.

Jesus calls these performers **hypocrites**, because they are actors, acting the part of pious, holy people when they are not. It is not having a standard that makes someone a hypocrite; it is falsely claiming to live by that standard when you in fact do not, or when you have a double standard that makes you a hypocrite.

Verily I say unto you, They have their reward: Jesus tells the one who gives so he can hear the applause of others that he should enjoy the applause, because that will be all the reward that he will receive. There will be no reward in heaven for the one who did it for the motive of an earthly reward.

Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly: Jesus pointed out the great value of doing good deeds for the glory of God. It is much better to receive our return from God, who rewards much more generously and much more **openly** than men do.

3. Praying the Right Way - Matthew 6:5-6

Jesus assumed that His disciples would give, so He told them the right way to give. He also assumed that His disciples would **pray**, and it was important that they not pray in the same way as the **hypocrites**.

For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets: There were two main places where a Jew in Jesus' day might pray in a hypocritical manner. They might pray at the synagogue at the time of public prayer, or on the street at the appointed times of prayer (9 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m.).

Prayer was not normally practiced *at the street corners*, but...one 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.

These prayers are a heavy insult to God. When we mouth words towards God while really trying to impress others, we are using God as a tool to impress others.

God is no tool!

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet: The idea is of a private place where we can impress no one except God.

Jesus isn't forbidding public prayer, but our prayers should always be directed to God and not towards man.

4. The Method of Prayer - Matthew 6:7-8

The right kind of prayer does not use **vain repetitions**, which is any and all prayer which is mostly words and no meaning; all lips and no mind or heart.

Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him: We don't pray to tell God things that He didn't know before we told Him.

Prayer is not designed to *inform* God, but to give *us a clear understanding of our need for God*, to humble our heart, to excite our desire for God, to inspire our faith, to create hope, to move

our thoughts from earth to heaven, and to remind us THERE is a *Father*.

5. The Model Prayer. - Matthew 6:9-13

The right kind of prayer comes to God as a **Father in heaven**. It recognizes whom we pray to, coming with a privileged title that demonstrates a privileged relationship.

This is a prayer focused on *community*; Jesus said “**Our Father**” and not “My Father.” “The whole prayer is social.

Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven: The right kind of prayer has a passion for God’s glory and agenda. His **name**, **kingdom** and **will** have the top priority.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: Prayer bring our needs to God. This will include needs for daily provision, forgiveness, and strength in the face of temptation.

When Jesus spoke of **bread**, He meant real bread, as in the sense of daily provisions.

Temptation literally means a *test*, not always an opportunity to do evil. God has promised to keep us from any testing that is greater than what we can handle

See **1 Corinthians 10:13**

God, while he does not ‘tempt’ men to do evil (James 1:13), He does allow his children to pass through periods of testing.

If we truly pray, **lead us not into temptation**, it will be lived out in several ways. It will mean:

- Never boast in your own strength.
- Never desire trials.
- Never go into temptation.
- Never lead others into temptation.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen: The right kind of prayer praises God and credits to Him **the kingdom and the power and the glory.**

6. The Importance of Forgiveness. - Matthew 6:14-15

Forgiveness is required for those who have been forgiven. We are not given the luxury of holding on to our bitterness towards other people.

Neither will your Father forgive your trespasses: Jesus has much more to say about forgiveness (Matthew 9:2-6, 18:21-35, and Luke 17:3-4). Here, the emphasis is on the *imperative* of forgiveness; on the fact that it is not an option.

7. Fasting the Right Way - Matthew 6:16-18

When you fast: Jesus spoke to these fundamental practices of spiritual life in His kingdom: giving, praying, and now fasting. Clearly, Jesus assumed that His followers *would* fast.

The term fast means to abstain from food. Some practicing fasting from other things like TV or sugar but the technical term is to abstain from all food.

Fasting is having a burden so big that you abstain from food to bring this burden to God.

The book of Acts records believers fasting before they made important decisions.

See **Acts 13:2**

See **Acts 14:23**

Fasting and prayer are often linked together.

The purpose of fasting should be to take your eyes off the necessary things of this world to focus completely on God. Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God, and to ourselves, that we are serious about our relationship with Him.

Fasting is something good that was corrupted by the hypocrisy of the religious people of Jesus' day.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites: The hypocritical scribes and Pharisees wanted to make sure that everybody knew they were fasting, so they would have a **sad countenance** and **disfigure their faces** so their agony of fasting would be evident to all.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast: In contrast, Jesus instructed us to take care of ourselves as usual and to make the fast something of a secret before God.

Conclusion: The real problem with the hypocrite is self-interest.

QUOTE *“Ultimately, our only reason for pleasing men around us is that we may be pleased.” - Martin Lloyd-Jones*



GROWTH GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Do the commands to “let your light show shine before men”, and “do not your alms before men” contradict each other? Why?

2. Why is the praise of men a reward in itself? Is that the reward they were seeking?
3. How can you give with your right hand without the left hand knowing? What does that mean?
4. What is indicated by the hypocrites praying on the street corner?
5. What is an example of “vain repetitions”?
6. Why should we pray if God already knows the things we have need of?
7. Why should we pray “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”? Are there obstacles to God’s will on earth?
8. How should we pray for our enemies?
9. Why is forgiveness required for Christians?
10. Should Christians fast today?
11. Besides fasting, what are some good things today that have been corrupted?
12. What is the purpose of fasting?