

THE MESSAGE OF THE MESSIAH KING

Lesson 15 Sermon on the Mount Part 2 Matthew 6

Jesus spent the first third of His teaching in chapter 5 on contrasting internal righteousness from God with the self-righteous rule-keeping imposed by the Pharisees. He emphasized the heart and the spirit of the Law rather than the letter of the law. Since the Babylonian exile, the Scribes and Pharisees had interjected themselves as the mediators between the people and God. They had become middlemen of access to God. The average Jew in the first century looked to the rabbi, ritual prayers and sacrifices through the priest. Since the destruction of the Temple, Pharisaic rabbis have become the sole proprietors of the latest word from God. When asked about how sin is atoned for in the absence of the Temple sacrifices, a non-practicing Jewish person has been taught “doing mitzvahs” – good deeds in general. They are led to believe that the greatest good deed is giving to charity. Therefore, the number of Jewish charitable organizations and causes are innumerable and Jewish philanthropy is huge. A practicing Jewish person relies on the following to atone for sin: *Tzedakah* - giving, *Tallit*- prayer, *Tzom*- fasting, *Tshuvah* - repentance. Because the Jewish people knew these rabbinic priorities of self-righteousness, Jesus addressed the first three in Matthew 6:1-18.

1. Giving - *Tzedakah*

Jesus well knew that giving financially is a trust test. Without faith/trust, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). He would use that test later to point out the greatest sin to the rich young ruler – failure to trust God (Matthew 19:16-21). Therefore Jesus begins and ends the second section in His sermon, with giving and the futility of a materialism focus (6:1-4; 24-34). Giving - *tzedakah* is translated as righteousness. In a Jewish context “doing *tzedakah*” is giving to charity, doing acts of mercy. According to a recent survey, “The average annual Jewish household donates \$2,526 to charity yearly, far more than the \$1,749 their Protestant counterparts give or the \$1,142 for Catholics, according to data from [Giving USA](#).” Rabbinic scribes have determined that eighteen is the numerical value of the Hebrew word “*chai*” which means “life.” “It is a Jewish custom to give monetary gifts in increments of 18, thus symbolically blessing the recipient of the gift with a good long life.”ⁱ The word alms was a first-century synonym for a charitable gift given to the poor. In the Temple, there were thirteen collection boxes for alms. They were wide at the bottom and narrow at the top and resembled trumpets. These boxes made a recognizable sound as the coins were dropped into them, and often those who wished to boast would pour a large number of coins in at once. This was called “sounding the trumpet.”ⁱⁱ Jesus warned against advertising their *tzedakah* of alms. He did not say that they should not give, but neither did He say that giving would atone for their sin. Never did Moses nor the prophets say giving equals atonement. “For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11). God never rescinded that. After giving 51 billion to charity Warren Buffet said, “There are many ways to get to heaven, but this is a good one.” Seems like a pretty loud media trumpet announcement. Jesus said, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 6:37,38). No one gives their way into heaven.

Takeaways

- Giving is good but never equals righteous atonement.
- Do not do your giving to get recognition or that alone will be your only reward.
- Do your giving privately as an expression of your direct relationship with God.
- God openly rewards those who have given secretly to Him.

2. Prayer – *tallit*

In first century Judaism, there were two styles of prayer; public and private. Public prayer was a very formal part of liturgy including psalms - *tehim*, scriptural readings from the *Torah*, - Law and scripture readings from the *Haf Torah*, prophets, and “*bruchas*” – benediction prayers. A good *Talmudim* – disciple, would have these daily prayers and for

special occasions memorized. Most would just have a *Siddur* – prayer book. Jewish men who have had their bar mitzvah (age 13 and older), do their prayers three times a day, “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17). They may ask one another in regards to prayer, “Do you “wrap *tefillin*?” referring to the custom of putting on phylacteries and prayer shawl before they pray. Jesus mentioned this in Matthew 23:5 “But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.” Jesus in this text condemned a public show of such prayer rituals. “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.” (Matthew 6:5). Jesus also condemned vain rote repetitions (Matthew 6:7).

In Matthew 6:19-34 Jesus contrasts self-reliance and self-gratification through materialism as opposed to trusting God and working to please Him. Jesus deals with our common struggle of handling this *tsuris* – anxiety. However, some of the phrases in this “Lord’s Prayer” are found in the prayers of Judaism of Jesus’ day. “Our Father in Heaven” – *Aveinu ah’ba Shammayim* is commonly found in Hebrew prayers. The first half of the prayer reveals three ways we glorify God in Heaven. “Our Father,” indicates son-ship and acknowledges the welfare of siblings (“us” is used three times). When Jewish people pray the Hebrew *Aveinu* - “our father” they understand it as a corporate prayer encompassing the whole Jewish community. This emphasis is missed in churches and has become just a private individualistic rote prayer occasionally said corporately at a graveside. Jesus taught His disciples “pray ye” (“ye” a KJV translation indicator of plurality rather than “thou” expressing private individuality). Jesus is addressing the misuse of public show prayers as opposed to private personal prayer and He is addressing both the communion of believers in corporate prayer and “secretly” in your closet. An example of Jesus praying a personal private prayer is, “Abba, Father, all things *are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt*” (Mark 14:36). “Abba” is a term of endearment for “daddy” just as “*Imma*” is for “mommy.”

“Hallowed be thy name” is part of the weekly Sabbath prayer called the *Kaddish* (which means 'sanctification' in Aramaic) which says “Magnified and sanctified be His great name.” We are to focus on the whole character and attributes that separate Him as God revealed to Moses at Mt. Sinai. “And the Lord passed before Him and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*” (Exodus 34:5, 6, 7a).

Takeaways

- Private prayer is rewarded by God and should not be self-centered but rather intimate and God centered.
- Public prayer is commended and never for show, but in unity for the benefit of the corporate whole.

“Thy kingdom come” is also from the Sabbath *Kaddish*. “May He establish His kingdom in our lifetime.” Jesus and John had been preaching the message “Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” He teaches them to rely on God to make it happen. He presented them with a preponderance of evidence that He is God in the flesh.” He never intended for His disciple to become Templar Knights leading crusades to the Holy Land to militarily establish His Kingdom much less to kill his fellow Jews.

“Thy will be done” - your will, whatever you wish to happen, let it happen, as opposed to my will; not in passive resignation, not with selfish motives. We are asking to be a part of God’s will on earth as an angel is an active part of God’s will in heaven, eagerly waiting for the next command, desiring to carry out the plan with fervency.

The second half of prayer reveals three ways God meets our needs as we carry out His will on earth. “Give us this day our daily bread” – present physical needs seems irrelevant to people who need to pray “Forgive us for eating so much daily bread, or any bread! Rather, God glorify yourself in our daily provisions, i.e. physical life. It is an acknowledgement that we depend on Him for health and life itself. He gives the strength to do His will and work.

Takeaways

- Prayer should be submissive seeking how we may obey His will in the here and now.
- Prayer for thankfulness for food should be for the purpose of strength to carry out His work.

How are we to forgive others? “Forgive us our debts” past deeds. It deals with an empty heart not just an empty stomach. It concerns God being glorified in our thought life. Confessing acknowledges our sin, and cleanses our conscience. Not forgiving blocks God’s forgiveness (6:14,15). When we do not forgive, we set ourselves above God as judge. Jesus even prayed for the soldiers at the foot of His cross, “forgive them for they know not what they do.”

- Confess the grudge to God as a sin.
- Go to the person and ask them to forgive you your grudge. 5:23,24
- Give the person something you value. 5:43,44

“Lead us not into temptation” Since temptation comes from within (James 1:14), and God does not tempt, then we are praying, lead me away from these inner tempting desires as well as the external vices of the world. Deliver us from evil means, from (the) evil (one). The spiritual strength to resist and escape is available. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Sin smashes God’s work of art but grace restores it. One of the great works of art in the Western world is Michelangelo’s *Pieta*, a marble statue of an anguished Mary holding the crucified Christ. Some years ago a fanatic nationalist rushed upon the masterpiece and began smashing it with a sledgehammer. Although the damage was significant, Vatican artists were able to restore the statue to near-perfect condition. You were created to be a masterpiece of God. Paul writes, “For we are God’s *poiema*” – a word that means God’s “workmanship,” is the goodness of God’s work in creating us that makes our fallenness so tragic. But God overcomes the defacing of his image in us by the transformative grace of His word by His Spirit. His plan is not simply to repair *most* of our brokenness. He will make us into new creations.

Takeaways

- Prayer should be for deliverance from evil practices.
- Prayer should be for deliverance from the evil one.

3. Fasting – *tzom*

Jesus who was seen generally as a Rabbi in the sense of a master teacher was measured by the common practice of fasting that other Rabbis and their *talmudim* – disciples practiced (Luke 5:33). The Hebrew word for fasting is *tzom* The greeting for a Jewish holy day in which they fast is *Tzom kol* meaning, May you have an easy fast. A Happy holiday greeting would be inappropriate since they are not celebrating but rather “afflict their souls” (Leviticus 16:31). In Matthew 4:2 Jesus inaugurated his ministry with a 40 day fast. Little emphasis is given to fasting doubtless because it is a physical and emotional not to mention a spiritual discipline. Jesus gave his disciples a pass on it while he was with them however, He did say that when He left, they would fast, “But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days” (Luke 5:35). Are we fasting while He is away?

New Testament examples of fasting

- for spiritual deliverance (Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29; Galatians 6:10-17).
- sending missionaries (Acts 13:2).
- selection of spiritual leadership in the church (Acts 14:23).
- instructions for fasting by married couples (1 Corinthians 7:5).

Takeaways

- Fasting for dietary reasons has its physical benefits
- Fasting for the purpose of prayer priority is expected by Jesus “they shall”.

4. Treasures Matthew 6:19-21

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures” *θησαυρίζω μὴ ὑμῖν θησαυρός*. A.T. Robertson emphasizes that those in the present imperative tense meaning - do not have this as a habit. He points out that there is a Greek play on words in this passage and “Wycliff translated it ‘Treasure not up for yourself treasures.’”ⁱⁱⁱ There is a high risk of losing earthly treasures or their value decreasing through moths that gnaw, rust that corrodes and thieves who steal. The Greek phrase for break through *διορύσσω* means to dig under the wall. “The Greek term for burglar is a mud digger.”^{iv} “Lay up for yourselves treasures” could be rendered “Treasure up for yourselves treasures in Heaven,” which are secure.

5. Single eye Matthew 6:22-24

The use of “good eye” and “evil eye” is an ancient Jewish idiom. “In first century Judaism the term “good eye” (*aiyin tovah*) meant that a person was generous, on the contrary, “evil eye” (*aiyin ra’ah*) meant he was stingy.”^v

In the Greek text the word for good meaning clear, was used of a marriage contract in which the husband was to repay the dowry “pure and simple” in case of a divorce.

Many commentators find the exegesis of this verse unclear. Is the eye dark because of inner disease or because of an exterior sinful or material-only focus? Both interpretations apply to the immediate context. Having an eye or mental focus on temporal treasure but not eternal treasure is at the least shortsighted. An eye for evil produces a darkening of the mind/heart. In the context of the section that follows, we are warned not to spend our lives focusing on the evil or the material to the neglect of the spiritual. In Matthew 18:9 Jesus says an evil eye can lead one into hell. “if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.” Trying to focus on both mammon and God is connected to the folly of doublemindedness in verse 24. No man can serve “two masters.” One or the other will be the master. “Mammon” is from the Greek *μαμμωνᾶς*. “Mammon” and is from a Chaldee, Syriac, and Punic word like *Plutus* referring to the money god (or devil). Devotion to money will mean despite for the other. They are opposed. One says gain and keep the other says serve and give. “hold to the one” means to line up face to face with one against the other.^{vi}

6. Single Master Matthew 6:25-34

Take no thought clearly means do not be obsessively anxious, about or “for your life” from the Greek *ὕμῶν*. The same word is used about Martha in Like 10:41. This is repeated in verse 31 and warns against anxiety over not only clothing, but food, drink or shelter. This does not permit sloth for even the flowers grow and the birds fly about. We cannot by worry get taller nor live longer. Anxiety may indeed shorten our lives and ruin our happiness.

7. Seeking First Matthew 6:33 “Seek ye first” from the Greek *ζητέω πρῶτον*

Wholeheartedly seek, rather than obsessing about mammon and material needs. Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow but empties today of its strength. DON’T WORRY (vs’s. 25,31,34). “The Kingdom of God” used five times and “Kingdom of Heaven” 30 times in Matthew and are synonymous.

- Seek His rule is from the Greek - *βασιλεία* (Christ’s realm, reign from the concept of His royalty) in our lives.
- Seek His righteousness from the Greek - *δικαιοσύνη* (character and conduct of Christ) to flow through our lives.
- Our Heavenly Lord and Master who adequately cares for the birds and flowers will doubtless meet our needs.
- Be like them not like the pagans who live in fear and superstition always placating their evil gods for good luck.

ⁱ Chabad.org

ⁱⁱ The Complete Jewish Study Bible, Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC., 2016, P 1393

ⁱⁱⁱ Word Pictures of the New testament, Volume 1, Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004 1, A.T. Robertson, p 69

^{iv} Ibid. P 69

^v The Complete Jewish Study Bible, Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC., 2016, P 1395

^{vi} Word Pictures of the New testament, Volume 1, Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004 1, A.T. Robertson, p 70

Other sources

Expository Notes in the Gospel of Matthew, W.A. Criswell, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids , Michigan, 1961