

Matthew 6:1 ¶ Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 6:2 Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Matthew 6:3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

Matthew 6:4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

The Lord shifts gears a little as we begin this chapter. He now begins to address areas in which we are giving the appearance of doing things to please Him. The specific address here is to those who are doing deeds of compassion in order to impress others. When your motive is to impress others and you accomplish that objective, you have received your reward. These are not deeds that will qualify as rewards when put to test by fire.

1Corinthians 3:13-15 "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Jesus identifies those who act in that manner as hypocrites, "an actor under an assumed character." In other words, they aren't what they appear to be. In other words, they appear to be serving the Lord, but in actuality they are serving self. I can't help but wonder how many in the "church" today fall into that category.

Those in the kingdom of heaven are to example the selfless actions of Jesus. Obviously, you can't hide what your right hand is doing from your left. I think the Lord is making the point that our actions should be done with a heart towards pleasing the Father without regard to what men will think of us. When we show compassion to others, we should be just as willing to show that compassion if no one else ever knows about it but the Lord. Nothing we do in submission and obedience to Him goes unnoticed by the Father. The day is coming (referenced in the passage from Corinthians above) when all that we have done in ministry with a pure heart will be rewarded openly.

As I looked at this again, I think it is important to note that Jesus says "when" you do your good deeds. It is expected that one who is part of the kingdom will be one who shows compassion for his fellowman through acts of kindness and provision.

I have found this to be a really hard teaching as a mom, grandma, and friend/teacher. You teach most effectively by example, and that example has to be visible. I think my struggle is most in the area of guarding my heart in the process. I know I struggle with pride, and I tend to be a people pleaser. I continually ask the Lord to help me in this area. He knows my heart better than I

do. I am not going to let this struggle hinder me from serving. I'll be happy to be just a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, though I'm striving for more.

Matthew 6:5 ¶ 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 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Matthew 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Matthew 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After service, the Lord addresses how we pray. Again, it was the custom of some in those times to make a public show of their prayers to God in order to impress others. Again, as with service, if your goal is to impress others, and you achieve your goal, you have received your reward. Those who pray in this manner are obviously not talking to God, they are putting on a performance before men; they are hypocrites. Jesus is saying that you shouldn't try to be like these men who are deemed so spiritual. Your prayer time should be a private time of communication between you and the Father. Prayers that are offered up from a heart of gratitude and burden for self and others are heard clearly by the Father and will be rewarded openly. He warns them about using vain repetitions like the heathen with the mistaken assumption that you are making your prayer more potent. Our prayer time is for our benefit—not the Father's; He already knows what's on our heart before we share it with Him. It's a time of fellowship that we have heart to heart with Him. If we pay attention to our prayers, we can learn much about ourselves and our relationship to God.

“vain repetitions” – I think it is important to note that Jesus isn't teaching that it is wrong to repeat prayers to Him. In fact, in Luke's account of this teaching He uses an illustration showing that persistence pays.

Luke 11:5-8 “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”

There is a difference, however, in persistence and empty repetition of words. I can't help but think of the Catholic use of rosaries. I am sure there are many sincere prayers made with the rosary, but I believe they are probably more often than not used as part of an empty ritual. I also can't help but think about what is being embraced by the “emergent church” according to what I am reading and hearing. The use of mantras or repetitive phrases and contemplative prayer are

focusing more on the process than on communication between the believer and God. These are the types of processes used by the “heathen” in their worship, i.e., the Hindus, Buddhists, etc. Again, the key is what is going on in the heart. At this point the Lord decides to instruct His followers as to what is an acceptable prayer. I think it is important to note that even this prayer, when memorized and repeated ritually, can become “vain repetition.” It’s meant to be a model only. I think it is also important to note that this prayer is composed of words, communication, not silence. We may sometimes find ourselves speechless in trying to share our heart with the Lord, and we may find ourselves overwhelmed by His presence that results in silence, but it isn’t a time of emptying ourselves in trying to connect with Him. That is not a biblical concept. We’re connected to Him the moment we say, “Our Father.”

In reading through this again, I thought it important to note that neither is this a prohibition against group prayer. Jesus taught that there is power in agreement in prayer.

Matthew 18:19-20 “Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

The disciples exemplified it as they waited for the anointing of the Spirit.

Acts 1:13-14 “And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”

It is included in the instruction concerning the elders praying together for healing of the sick.

James 5:14-15 “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

Jesus is addressing the actions of individual believers in this teaching.

Matthew 6:9 ¶ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

“After this manner” indicates a model, an example.

“Our Father” – This is an address showing relationship that acknowledges our dependency and His authority and power.

“which art in heaven” – This is a recognition of His existence as one in authority over His creation and dwelling in oversight of it.

“Hallowed be thy name” – A name is associated with one’s character according to the Greek. It is important that we recognize God as holy and pure in character. His character is why we can always trust Him to do what is right and what is best for those who are part of His kingdom.

Matthew 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

“Thy kingdom come.” – This represents a desire to see God on the throne and Satan’s kingdom abolished. Today it’s a prayer by the believer for the second coming of Jesus.

“Thy will be done...” – This represents a desire to live in an environment where God’s will is always done; where sin is no more present; where the flesh no longer has any influence on our lives; a place where we will never have to question our motives again. I can’t wait!

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

This represents a desire for God to provide our needs. It is recognizing that what we are given comes from Him. It’s also an instruction to trust God daily; we are to focus on today—not tomorrow.

Proverbs 27:1 “Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

Not one among us can guarantee that we will live to see tomorrow.

(12/08) In reading this again, I thought about the physical and spiritual application of this phrase. I think the main reference is to physical, but we certainly need a daily portion of God’s word as well.

(2/10) As I was listening to James Merritt one morning, he made a stronger point than I did in my initial observation—my paraphrase: When we ask God to “give” us something, we are acknowledging Him as the one in possession of what we need.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

The Greek for the word *debts* includes moral failure as well as obligations. Luke’s account of this instruction is worded as follows: “And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.” The point being made is that we are asking to be treated comparable to our treatment of others. I’m not sure that is something we think about very often when we pray. We are very quick to justify our offenses or just hope that time heals the hurt. It’s a hard thing to humble oneself before someone else and admit wrong and ask

forgiveness. The Lord is teaching us to examine ourselves and act with humility and forgiveness toward others before we come to Him seeking the same.

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

The Greek for *temptation* is a reference to “putting to proof” as well as solicitation. James clearly states that God does not tempt man.

James 1:13 “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man....”

I thought it was interesting to note that the Greek for *evil* included a reference to the devil. These two phrases form one thought, so I think the Lord is instructing His disciples to pray for God’s deliverance when the enemy tries to tempt us to do wrong. Job is the prime example. Satan sought to tempt him to sin by testing him through extremely trying circumstances. He does the same with us in varying degrees. God brought Job through the process in victory, and He will do the same for us. We possess the indwelling Holy Spirit to empower us for that very purpose. In fact, Paul shares God’s promise to deliver us in his letter to the Corinthians.

1Corinthians 10:13 “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.”

“Thine is the kingdom....” – This closing is again acknowledging God’s sovereignty and power in His kingdom. It is acknowledging that God’s sovereignty and power will never diminish neither will His kingdom end. He is, always has been and always will be worthy of our praise and worship. In other words, we aren’t praying to “a god” who cannot provide for His creation; we are praying to THE all powerful, eternally existent sovereign God who is bound by no limitations in what He can do.

“Amen” – In the Greek this makes reference to being trustworthy, firm and sure. It’s an affirmation of the truth of the previous statement.

Matthew 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

Matthew 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

At this point Jesus again emphasizes that we cannot expect God to respond to us any differently than we respond to others. It doesn’t mean that He loves us any less; in fact, it’s proof that His love is pure. He is more concerned that we grow spiritually than in granting our every petition. He is in the process of sanctifying us, making us more like His Son Jesus.

Romans 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

A loving Father will allow one to experience the consequences of sin as an opportunity to learn. He knows that spiritual growth results in producing joy in our lives and allowing us to experience the abundance of His blessing.

Romans 14:17 "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

John 10:10 "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Matthew 6:16 ¶ Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward

The next deed addressed is fasting. As with doing good deeds and prayer, there were those who wanted to make sure that everyone knew they were fasting by their expression of mournfulness and appearance of fainting strength. Again, they have received their reward by accomplishing their objective. Jesus minces no words and is definitely not politically correct in assessing such people; He calls them hypocrites. They are not sincere in their motive for fasting; they're putting on a show to establish a reputation for being something they are not.

Matthew 6:17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

Matthew 6:18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Jesus is teaching that our fasting should be an act of sacrifice before the Lord. We should take extra care to look especially nice and not indicate in any way that we are fasting. Again, God the Father is looking at our hearts. When our works are judged, He will reward us openly for all our truly righteous works.

Reminder – This is a teaching to those who are followers of Christ. Jesus has already endured the judgment for our sin. The only judgment the believer will have to face is that for reward. Those who have rejected Christ will endure the Great White Throne judgment for public indictment to eternal condemnation.

Matthew 6:19 ¶ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Matthew 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

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

Treasure is basically a reference to anything you value. It's interesting that these verses follow the instructions regarding actions taken for the purpose of winning the admiration of others. That is one kind of treasure. Other treasures are more

material in nature. Jesus is teaching that treasures accumulated on earth are subject to being destroyed and/or stolen. Treasures accumulated in heaven, however, are eternal; they cannot be destroyed or stolen. The more focused we are on amassing earthly treasure, the less effort is given to accumulating heavenly treasure. The type of treasure we put the most effort toward accumulating is a clear indicator of who is on the throne of our heart.

I believe this is a real challenge for the believer in today's world. Everything in our culture is geared to being successful, which in the world's terms is having more and more of the best available. Possessing wealth and enjoying the kudos of men is not a sin; but when the wealth and admiration become the focus of your ambitions and energy, they basically become idols in your life. They will eventually result in your becoming a spiritual pauper.

This begs the question—What is heavenly treasure? Frankly, I think the best answer is found in the words of Isaiah.

*Isaiah 64:4 "For since the beginning of the world **men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen**, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."*

There are some specific treasures mentioned in scripture.

*Colossians 2:3 "In whom are hid all **the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**."*

*2Timothy 4:8 "Henceforth there is laid up for me **a crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*

*James 1:12 "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive **the crown of life**, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."*

*1Peter 5:2 "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive **a crown of glory** that fadeth not away."*

Matthew 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Matthew 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

"single" = clear, pure, unmixed

"evil" = hurtful, diseased

It seems to me that the Lord is using these two words in direct contrast to one another. In context with the preceding and following verses, I think you have to understand the reference to be toward the treasures you are striving to accumulate and the master you serve. A believer's eyes should be pure and

clearly intent upon gaining heavenly treasure. If that is your intention, it stands to reason that your body will be filled with the things of the Spirit that will be obvious to others.

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

If, however, your focus is on earthly things, your body will be filled with things of the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like...."

Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

This verse is a statement of fact; you can only serve one master. When I see this wording, I can't help but think of God's declaration of his feelings toward Jacob and Esau and Jacob's relationship with Rachel and Leah where scripture explains itself.

*Genesis 29:30-31 "And he went in also unto Rachel, **and he loved also Rachel more than Leah**, and served with him yet seven other years. And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren."*

The Greek for *hate* actually includes "to love less." The masters in view in this case are named—God and mammon. *Mammon* is a reference to earthly wealth and riches. This thought follows directly in context to the previous verses. The interesting paradox is that in serving God you will accumulate wealth and riches, but they are of the eternal kind, not the temporary physical kind of this life. I believe there are Christians who possess true faith, but who are more intent on accumulating worldly treasure than heavenly treasure. They love God less than they love the treasure of this world. They probably wouldn't admit it, but their actions and lifestyle declare otherwise. You cannot truly call yourself a servant of God when you are consumed with attaining worldly treasure.

Matthew 6:25 ¶ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Matthew 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Matthew 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Matthew 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Matthew 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

The Lord now declares that His followers should not be anxious about having enough to eat or drink or wear. These are simple provisions for God to make when compared to giving you life in the first place. In other words, why would He give you life and then not provide for that life to be sustained? He instructs them to observe the birds; they don't plant seed to grow produce and reap a harvest, yet the Father provides them food. The implication: Don't you think He values you much more than they? He then poses another question: Can you make yourself grow taller? The implied answer: No, but God can; He is in authority over His creation. Knowing that, then answer this question: Why are you anxious about having enough to wear. Look at the lilies of the field; they grow without putting forth any labor and they are more beautifully adorned than even King Solomon was (the richest king of Israel). In other words, God gives them life and provides for their nourishment for growth and their clothing.

Matthew 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Matthew 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

Matthew 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Conclusion: If God takes the care to clothe the grass of the field so beautifully even though it only lives for a short time, don't you think He will provide for you? The sad statement—O ye of little faith. You should not be anxious about what you eat, drink or have to wear. Your heavenly Father knows that these are things you need; they aren't luxury items. Scripture is abundant with statements of the Lord's faithfulness in providing for His own.

Philippians 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Psalms 23:1 "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Psalms 34:10 "...but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."

Psalms 68:19 "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah."

Psalms 84:11 "For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

"For after all these things do the Gentiles seek" – I think the key here is that the Gentiles have to be concerned with these things because they do not recognize God as their Father. (12/08) Remember, Jesus is ministering to and teaching the house of Israel at this point in time.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matthew 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

The point of this section of teaching—Seek to accumulate the treasures of God’s eternal kingdom by living according to His righteousness (as exemplified in His Son Jesus). When our focus is on serving God, we don’t have to worry about having what we need; He will provide it. We are, as instructed in the model prayer, to trust God daily for our needs. We aren’t to be anxious about tomorrow, but to take each day as it comes. We aren’t guaranteed tomorrow. When tomorrow comes, God will be just as sufficient for the needs of that day as He is for today’s.

These verses are not teaching that we are not to make provision for ourselves and our families with hard work and preparation. The point is that we are not to be anxious about the results of that hard work and preparation since we have a heavenly Father who is watching out for us. Scripture is clear in teaching that we should have a good work ethic.

Proverbs 6:6-8 “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.”

Proverbs 31 (the whole chapter)

2Thessalonians 3:10 “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

Exodus 20:9 “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work....”

1Timothy 5:8 “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

Part of serving God is to work and provide for ourselves and our family in accordance with His instruction and with a heart of submission and obedience to Him. The key is the attitude of the heart. If our hearts are yielded to Him in all that we do, we can rest in the truth that He will provide our needs according to His purpose, which is always righteous and good.

I think another thing that causes man to stumble over this truth is the ability to discern need from want. God’s ways and thoughts are much higher than ours.

Isaiah 55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

What He determines to be our needs may be very different than what we determine them to be.

There are many in this world who do not have the essential needs in life, and Jesus is not saying that God is not concerned with the needs of the unbelieving masses. We must remember that this teaching is directed to those who have chosen to follow Christ and are trusting in God for their provision.