

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 14TH-15TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

### HOW TO GIVE (MATT. 6:1-4)

#### THE OVERARCHING THEME

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the state of the heart is the main focus. Jesus wants to point out the difference between religious masquerades and genuine spirituality. The Pharisees had become self-righteous (creating their own standard of good), and **self-righteousness always leads to hypocrisy.**

#### WE CAN ALL BE HYPOCRITES

Jesus seems to hate appearance that doesn't reflect reality. That doesn't mean Jesus hates us when we are hypocrites, but that He hates it when we are not honest because dishonesty hurts people.

- We often fall to hypocrisy when we do good things for others for the wrong reasons.

#### PRACTICING OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BE SEEN

When Jesus commands us to "Be careful not to practice [our] righteousness in front of others" He isn't saying we shouldn't practice right living, but that we're not to do it for the praise of others.

- **Remember, Jesus wants to get to the core of us. Over time, the why is what will steer the what.**

#### WE RECEIVE A LESSER REWARD

What happens when we do good things for the wrong reasons is we get a lesser reward. This means people may praise us, but we get no reward from God.

- **The very hard question is now introduced: Who do we care more about pleasing, God or people? Are we being honest right now?**

#### THIS DOESN'T MEAN ALL PUBLIC ACTS ARE BAD

Jesus did public acts of righteousness, but with the Kingdom and setting an example for others in mind.

- Sometimes we have to promote benevolence for the sake of motivation and teaching others how to serve their communities. **The question is who we're illuminating, us or God?**

#### THE POINT IS SIMPLE: IT IS ABOUT GOD

We all feel the need to be known and validated. **The trick is to truly know that God knows and validates us so we don't have to find that fulfillment in others.**

- It takes balance, wisdom, confidence, and grace which all come from God. **We must lean on Him and make it all about Him if we're to be content.**

#### "TRULY I TELL YOU..."

Whenever Jesus says this, it means that an extra important principle is about to be taught.

- Jesus was talking about more than just how we give and help others. Jesus was asking us about our motives and who we care the most about receiving a reward from.

#### HOW TO PRAY (MATT. 6:5-8)

##### THE THEME IS THE SAME

Jesus' teaching on how to pray has the same theme as how to give. Jesus wasn't prohibiting public prayer, but asking what the heart is behind public prayers.

- Basically, if we only pray in public but not in private, something is wrong. **We are to be in private what we claim to be in public.**

#### "WHEN YOU PRAY, DON'T BABBLE..."

It is really interesting that a warning about mindlessly repeating a prayer is taught right before Jesus prays the Lord's Prayer. Jesus was teaching us how to pray, not just to recite something He had said.

- **That doesn't mean the Lord's Prayer is not worth saying, but that we understand its depth!**

#### WE MUST BE CAREFUL WITH REPETITION

In Jesus' time, the pagans (non-Christian beliefs) would repeatedly pray to their gods hoping to convince them of their need's importance. Jesus was teaching us that He knows our needs, so simply ask in faith.

- We must also remember this in times of repentance. **If we're sincere in prayer, we don't have to mindlessly repeat.**

#### PRAYER IS NOT ABOUT INFORMING GOD

God knows everything. Prayer is our way of expressing to Him and ourselves our desire to let God have control of our lives.

- The deeper question is simply **do we mean what we say? Are we trying to beg our way to selfish wants or are we trying to connect with God and His will?**

#### "THEREFORE, YOU SHOULD PRAY LIKE THIS..."

The Lord's Prayer is not a magical formula, but a guideline for the prayer lives of Jesus' followers. We should seek to pray like Jesus, not merely what Jesus prayed.

- In our Following Jesus course we teach people the P.R.A.Y. method. **Meaningful prayer always puts God's kingdom in focus.**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER (MATT. 6:9-15)

##### "OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, YOUR NAME BE HONORED AS HOLY."

This indicates that prayer should be a desire of believers and it should be from a **position of reverence and awe.** Setting His name as holy puts Him above everything else.

- **We must approach God knowing He is perfect and the answer to all of our problems.**

##### "YOUR KINGDOM COME. YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

This is the acknowledgement that this world is broken and needs God's kingdom to help us. Praying for His will shows our humility and trust that He is the only hope for mankind.

- **We must remember that He produces but we are called to be the workers in the field.**

##### "GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD."

We can take these words at face value. **We must depend on God for provision and give Him thanks for all we have.**

- This does not condone laziness. It is the acknowledgment that God is the source of all goodness and ability for us to have our basic needs met.

##### "AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS."

Sin places us in debt to God, and **we must repent to be relieved of that debt.** We don't gain forgiveness by forgiving others, we are only forgiven by submitting to God. But, **we are to show mercy like God has shown mercy to us.**

##### "AND DO NOT BRING US INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE."

These are preventative steps. **If we are not preparing for the evil yet to come, we will fall to sin and temptation.**

- God will protect us and insulate us with His Spirit if we will ask Him to. If we pray this more, we have to repent less.

#### HOW TO FAST (MATT. 6:16-18)

##### AGAIN, IT IS OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

Fasting is simply sacrificing a comfort in order to set aside time for prayer and meditation. Jesus doesn't give specifics on fasting, but emphasizes the heart and purpose behind it.

- In the OT fasts were mandatory. **Jesus always calls us deeper by pointing out the desire and benefits more than the obligation.**

#### WE GO BACK TO THE HEART

Jesus warns us not to make ourselves look malnourished when we fast because the reward of fasting is reduced to people's opinions not God's blessing.

- When we fast, we are to act like we aren't. **It is self-righteous when we tell others how tough it is to be as good as we think we're being.** Zing!

#### WHAT (OR WHO) IS THE MAIN FOCUS?

- There is an undercurrent to Jesus' lesson in chapter 6: **What is the state of our heart?** Jesus wants us to go beyond religious facades and the pursuit of self into a genuine spiritual journey, but it all begins in the heart.

**FOR THE BELIEVER:** Does our weekend self look like our weekday self? Are we trying to manipulate our way into heaven without a genuine relationship with Jesus? Who are we trying to impress? **Who is this walk really about?** Us or the One that created us? If we pray, fast, and give, why do we do it?

**FOR NON-BELIEVERS:** Has pursuit of self given you what you've longed for? Does the praise of others fulfill you at your core? Where does your sense of value come from? Are you satisfied? Content? Or, are you restless?

- What is the desire of our heart?
- Why do we do the things we do?
- The question is really this: **What are we truly looking for?** Pleasure? Contentment? Affirmation? The truth? According to Jesus, the truth is the only thing that sets us free.