

Matthew 6 The Sermon on the Mount

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.

1. Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen. Jesus condemns outward piety, and then he singles out three illustrations of His meaning. The Christian is not forbidden to practice righteousness before men, but to make it his object to be seen.

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.

2. When, therefore, thou doest alms good deeds. This is the first example. The wrong way, that of the hypocrites, is described. The Greek word rendered hypocrite means a theatrical actor, one who is not real, but acts a part. Their method was to give alms as an outward show. In our age the world rings with the praises of the millionaire who gives a few thousands, but is silent concerning the humble ones who have taken from their necessities and given to the same cause. Sound a trumpet before thee. This seems to be a proverbial expression to denote the making of a thing publicly known. The meaning is, when you give to the poor, do not make a show of it. Hypocrite is an Greek actor. The actors wore masks and appeared to be somebody else than they really were. So, too, are the religious hypocrites.

Matthew 6:3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 6:4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

3, 4. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. A strong expression, to indicate that there must be no publishing of our alms deeds. That thine alms may be in secret. It is not concealment that is required, so much as to avoid outward show. Openly is literally, "in the open place," in the last day, when every secret thing is made manifest.

I Corinthians 3:10-15 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 3:13 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.

3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

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.

5. Prayer is the second example of the right and wrong kind of righteousness. That men ought to pray is assured. The wrong way is that of the hypocrites, the men who make a public show of their devotions.

Some Love to pray standing in the synagogues. These love, not to pray, but to pray where they will be seen, and pray that they may be seen. So the Pharisees took pains to be in some public place, where they could strike an attitude of prayer in the sight of many observers. The same spirit is often seen still.

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.

6. By the closet private devotions are meant, this is not designed to prohibit prayers in public worship assemblies. The Lord himself both prayed "in the mountain alone," in the night alone, and in public in the presence of his disciples. We have records of many prayers offered by the apostles in public assemblies. "Thy closet" means any private or secret place. Peter's closet was on the house-top; the Savior's on a mountain alone.

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.

7. What is forbidden is not *much* praying, nor praying *in the same words* (the Lord did both), but making the number of prayers, length of prayers, or time spent in praying, a point of observance and of merit. The heathen Baal worshipers did such cf:

1 Kings 18:26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

This gives an example of the repetitions of the heathen.

Mahometans and Catholics still hold that there is merit in repeating or chanting certain prayers a set number of times.

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

8. Here is given the reason for short prayers. Many prayers apparently aim to give God information on matters connected with this world that He already knows about.

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

9. After this manner pray ye. This is not what to pray but how to pray. The Savior does not bid us use these words, nor command any set form, but gives this as a proper example of prayer.

Our Father which art in heaven. These words reveal a very tender relationship between God and the true worshiper, and base the petition on the fact that the child speaks to the Father. Hallowed be thy name. Of the seven petitions of the Lord's prayer the first three are in behalf of the cause of God; the glory of His name, the extension of His kingdom, and the prevalence of His will. The other four, which are properly placed last, as least important, pertain to our individual needs. No one can offer the first three petitions who is in disobedience. *Hallowed.* Holy, sacred, revered.

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

10. Thy kingdom come. The Messiah's kingdom had not yet come, but was proclaimed by the Lord as at hand. It did speedily come, but in its fulness, and in its final triumph over evil, it has not yet come. For this coming we may now pray, and the prayer is answered in part by each success of the gospel. Thy will be done, on earth, as in heaven. None can pray thus who have not merged their own wills into the divine will. He, in effect, prays the prayer of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine, be done." It is mockery for disobedient lips to utter such a prayer.

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

11. We are told to ask for our bread, not for future years, but for "this day."

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

12. Forgive us our debts, as we forgive just like we forgive. Debts mean moral obligations unfulfilled--our shortcomings, our sins. Let it be noted with emphasis that God is asked to forgive us *as* we forgive others. We ask, in other words, that he may mete out to us what we measure to others.

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.

13. Lead us not into temptation. The thought is that God may preserve us from the temptations that might lead us astray. No man can pray these words who does not try to keep out of temptation.

For thine is the kingdom. This clause, called the doxology.

Matthew 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

14, 15. Our Lord makes it a condition of our obtaining forgiveness, that we shall have a merciful, forgiving spirit.

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

16, 17, 18. When thou fastest. This is the third example of the right and wrong way of righteousness, in contrast. The same principle of doing nothing for mere show is still insisted upon. Fasting is not wrong, and, indeed, is often blessed richly, but not when our object is to appear to men to fast. Of sad countenance. It was common to assume a woe-begone look, put ashes upon the head, and even wear sackcloth, in order to show to the world deep humiliation. This kind of show is condemned.

Anoint thine head. That is, dress as usual. Wash thy face. The usual practice before eating. Thy Father . . . shall reward thee. Our self-denial must be for the eyes of God, not of men.

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

19. Lay not up treasures on the earth. This forbids, not the laying up of treasures, but laying them up on the earth; that is, the piling up of worldly wealth for worldly purposes.

Riches are no sin in themselves, but the improper use of riches is a sin. Where moth and rust corrupt. An unused garments often become moth-eaten; unused coin becomes rusty. All earth treasure will finally perish. Thieves break through. Literally, "dig through." Often robbers in the East dig through the house walls of mud or unburnt brick.

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:

20. Lay up . . . treasures in heaven. This is the only way to save our wealth. It is a positive precept. Our wealth must be consecrated to God and used as his work demands. Wealth used for doing good is treasure laid up in heaven.

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

21. For. This introduces a reason for the preceding precepts. Where thy treasure is will be thy heart. This states a universal truth. A man's heart will be upon what he treasures most. If his treasure is in heaven, heaven will have his heart.

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

22, 23. The light of the body is the eye. This is not an abrupt transition, but bears on the same subject. If one's eye is diseased, all he sees is wrong. So the mind, or conscience, is the light of the soul. If these be darkened, all is darkness; if these see aright, all is light.

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.

24. No man can serve two masters. He cannot give his heart to two services at the same time. He cannot follow two callings successfully. Ye cannot serve God

and mammon. This is the direct application. The Chaldee word "Mammon" means money or riches. It is here personified as an idol. "Mammon" originally meant "trust," or confidence, and riches is the trust of worldly men. If God be not the object of supreme trust, something else will be, and it is most likely to be money.

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?

25. Take no thought for your life. The expression "Take thought," meant to be anxious. The Revision properly renders it, "Be not anxious." The Greek word means, "to have the mind distracted." Christ does not forbid prudent forethought. Is not the life more than food? The argument is: God gave the life, and it is higher than food. If he gave it, he will see that it is sustained, if you trust in him. So, too, he made the body. He will see that it is clothed.

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?

26. Behold the fowls of the air. God feeds the birds without their sowing or reaping, but they do the work for which they were created, and God takes care of them. So, too, he will take care of us--not in idleness or improvidence--but if we do the work for which God created us.

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

27. Which of you can add one cubit, etc. There can hardly be a doubt that this ought to be rendered, "add one cubit to his age," or period of life. The idea is: "What is the use of anxiety? Who, by his anxiety, can add anything to life's journey"? If it is proper to speak of "*length* of life," it is also appropriate to speaking of adding a cubit to its length.

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:

28. Consider the lilies. While the lilies do not toil or spin, they do their work, draw up sustenance from the earth, and drink in the dew, rain and sunbeams. So we are to do our appointed work. If we do this, trusting in God, he will supply all our needs.

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

29. To the Jew the court of Solomon was the highest representation of human glory. The magnificence of the court is not only celebrated in Jewish writings, but in all Oriental literature, and it is still proverbial throughout the East. Yet he was never arrayed with the taste and beauty of one of these. It is probable that both birds and lilies were in sight from where the Lord was sitting.

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?

30. If God so clothe the grass of the field. Wild flowers belong to the herbage that is cut with the grass. In Palestine the forests in many localities disappeared thousands of years ago, and in the scarcity of fuel, dried grass and weeds are often used to heat the oven.

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

31. Therefore take no thought. Have no anxiety over the question of food and raiment. Do your duty, with a full trust in God that he will see that you do not lack for these things.

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.

32. For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. This worldliness, anxiety, and distrust, might do in heathen, who have no knowledge of a heavenly Father, but you have a heavenly Father, and he knows that ye need all these things.

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

33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. The promise is made that if we seek it first, and its righteousness, all earthly wants will be supplied. The condition demands,

1. That we seek the kingdom *first* in point of time. Some propose to secure a competence, and after they have gained it, they will serve God. **2.** We must make it *first* in importance. Everything else must give way before its demands. **3.** It

must be *first* in our affections, have our whole hearts. We must "love the Lord our God with the whole heart"

Matthew 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. **22:38** This is the first and great commandment.

His righteousness is the righteousness that God bestows upon those who are in the Kingdom, Christ's righteousness, the forgiveness of sins in His name.

Zec 3:1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. **3:2** And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: *is* not this a brand plucked out of the fire? **3:3** Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. **3:4** And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. **3:5** And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels. **61:11** For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. **1:17** For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

I Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; **15:4** And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Romans 3:21-28 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; **3:22** Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: **3:23** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of

God; 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 3:25 Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 3:26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. 3:27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

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.

34. Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow. Again, it should read, as in the Revision, "Have no anxiety about to-morrow." The morrow will take thought for itself. Not "take care of itself," but bring its own cares, anxieties and troubles. We should not foolishly increase our present burden by borrowing trouble about to-morrow.

Sources: KJV Bible, People's New Testament Commentary by B.W. Johnson, Clarke's commentary, and e-Sword.