

The Gospel According to
Matthew

Lesson #8 – Ch.6:1-15

Jesus teaches on practicing righteousness before men:

In the area of charitable deeds – Ch.6:1-4

In the area of prayer – Ch.6:5-15

Be sure you spend a few minutes sitting before the Lord before you begin this study. Ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse you from any sin that would prohibit you from hearing the Lord speaking to you. Let His Spirit sweep through your heart and bring your mind and heart clean before Him. It's important; sin has a way of getting in the way of us being able to hear God.

Spurgeon says it's the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus. Satan's work is just the opposite of this. Satan is constantly trying to make us *consider ourselves* as priority instead of putting Christ and others first. He tempts us to dwell on ourselves, our feelings, our doings, and our future plans and desires, instead of our Savior. If we want to overcome Satan, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. Our peace comes from "Looking unto Jesus", following His lead - **let Him lead your day**, we are to follow!

Did your day begin with a few minutes to place yourself under God's will for today? We need to position ourselves "ready for battle and assignment" every day, before the day is spent, as not to miss what God wants to do in and through us that day.

If you have not done that, do that now!

Take your eyes off your problems and onto the person of Jesus.

Lay it all down:

List the things that are weighing on you at this moment:

Now, you are ready to look at His Word!

In the past several weeks we have discussed the mindset and heart of the Scribes and Pharisees. They were consumed with pride, needing to look spiritually superior to their fellow men. Their hearts were far from God, but outwardly they looked like they had it all together. They interpreted scripture to fit their own moral standards and practiced their self made traditions to look exceptional to others.

As we come into Matthew Ch.6, Jesus speaks to us about "practicing righteousness" before men. He gives us many "do not's" and "you shall not's", concerning four main areas;

worship; giving charitable deeds, prayer, fasting and wealth. We will study through the first two;
*Charitable Deeds
*Prayer

➡ **Read the text – Matthew 6:1-15**

In the “Message version” of the bible, you will find Matthew 6:1 written in these simple words, “*Be especially careful when you are trying to be good, so that you don’t make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding!*” (Well, that’s pretty easy to grasp hold of now isn’t it?)

Doing a charitable deed before men, is doing a good work for the applause of men and not the reward of God.

The applause of men - why is it that we sometimes like to be thought of as a big giver? Why do we want to *look* good to others? There lies in the recesses of every human heart a desire to be lifted up and exalted, a desire to be looked upon with eyes of admiration and high esteem. We want to be *feel* important. It comes from deep with our carnal sin nature we were all born with.

There is nothing wrong with needing to feel worth, or needing to know we have value. Jesus Christ gives us our greatest sense of worth in what He sacrificed for us, in the act of dying a cruel death on a rugged cross, just to have intimate, personal relationship with you and I. That was redemption at the greatest cost! God’s only Son sacrificed for an opportunity for us to know the King of Kings personally! We should never question our worth or value after having such a significant price paid for our redemption. It’s been ***proven*** - we are ALL extremely valuable to God.

The setback arises in the human heart when we want to be exalted above one another and when we turn to seek the applause of men rather than the approval of God.

Do you really believe in your heart that you are valuable to God? Why or why not?

1. Read Matthew 23:1-12. List as many phrases as you can find that describe the outward righteous acts of the Pharisees.

Phylacteries were small leather boxes that contained Hebrew texts worn by Jewish men at Morning Prayer, as a reminder to keep the law. As they took pride in the outer garments of religious positions, the phylacteries grew larger as a means of looking more pious. They dug it as people looked at their garments and thought of them as holy and superior.

2. When they worked for the Lord, who did they make sure were watching? Matthew 23:5

3. Back in Matthew 6:2-4, what instructions does Jesus give us for doing good works?

Jesus hated the Pharisees need for looking superior and He let that be known. Nowhere else in scripture does Jesus condemn the actions of a group of people like He does here with the Scribes and Pharisees.

Proud people MUST be supreme.

4. What kind of rewards do you think we receive from doing good works with a humble heart? See Matthew 25:34-40 to find the greatest reward.

Look up these scriptures for further types of rewards from God. Write them out below.

a. Psalm 127:3

b. Colossians 3:22-24

Find through these scriptures some other things we do that constitute a reward.

a. Colossians 3:23- Who should we be trying to please? What reward is promised?

b. Psalm 19:7-8; with v.11 – Describe the benefits of following God’s word.

c. Matthew 6:4, 6, 17, 18 – If we serve others quietly – God will reward us in ways we didn’t expect. When God rewards a life, who sees it?

The last three scriptures you read mentioned deeds done in secrecy, but rewarded by God openly! Matthew mentioned these three; those good works you did for others that no one knows about, those secret prayers that were heard by God's ears alone, and the times of fasting and prayer that were done privately, are all rewarded by the Lord *openly!* That means they will no longer be kept secret. Those prayer warriors will be known to everyone one day, because our Lord will personally reward them openly, unveiled, in full view, for all to see! That's powerful. Many of your names come to mind as I picture you as prayer warriors laying their heavy jeweled crowns down at the feet of Jesus.

Paul exhorts all believers to run their race in Christ in such a way to win the prize! (1 Cor. 9:24) We should desire good rewards from the Lord as we live our life in obedience and faithfulness to Him. There is nothing wrong with looking forward to a reward. Paul continues to say they run to obtain a perishable crown, but we run to obtain an imperishable one. We can look forward to reward that will last for eternity! So run, doing the will of God; feeding the poor, visiting those in prison, sharing the good news of the gospel with the thirsty soul and do it under the eyes of God, only concerned with His approval, and you will be richly rewarded with an imperishable crown placed upon your brow by the Lord Himself.

Of course in response to this great gift and recognition, we will humbly place the crown at His holy feet knowing we deserve nothing, for every good work, every good deed that brought with it a blessing to another, was brought by the power of the Holy Spirit and by His hand, nothing was birthed by our own power and for that reason we will leave the crown out of admiration and humility there at His feet.

5. What kinds of works does Jesus call "good works"? List a few. Matthew 25:35-45

6. Seeking men's blessings forfeits God's. Who was seeking the praise of men in the synagogues? Matthew 6:2 _____

What did they receive as their reward? _____

There can be two kinds of Hypocrite;

1. The non-believer pretending he is a Christian.
2. Believers who are carnal living in sin but pretending to be spiritual and dedicated to God.

7. Look up the word hypocrite in the dictionary and give your definition.

I believe one of the greatest needs of the church today is to be "real". We don't need any more phonies pretending to serve God. What draws the unbeliever to Christ is not the perfect

unstained life lived through the faultless Christian, but the life lived with joy and peace in Christ in the middle of the difficulties life brings us. What sinner wants to measure himself up against the one who professes not to deal with much sin? Real forgiven sinners draw real needy unbelievers into the faith.


The charitable deed done in Matthew 6:1-4 was known as almsgiving, and to the Jew there were known to be three great cardinal works. The first was giving to the poor or almsgiving, second was prayer and the third was fasting. *The best deeds God blesses are done and forgotten.*

8. What did David say about his offerings? 2 Samuel 24:24

9. King Solomon was the richest man that ever lived in the Old Testament times, what words of wisdom does he give us in Proverbs 3:9-10 What promises can you find from this kind of living?_____

10. We are to meet every need we can and leave the bookkeeping to God, realizing we have only done what we should have done. Write out Luke 17:10 here.

Matthew 6:4 lays out this principle:

 **“If we remember – God will forget; but if we forget, God will remember!”**

Have you ever done a good work just to have someone else get all the credit for it? Maybe it wasn't giving money, but you put your blood sweat and tears into a project and no one ever thought to say “thank you” or say “job well done?”

I think this has happened to every one of us at one time or another, but sister - God doesn't forget! He saw all that hard work and effort and sacrifice. He saw your heart that wanted to please Him, don't get all twisted up in the fact that you have had no earthly reward in the way of verbal or monetary “thanks”. He's got you listed. He knows the facts. Your reward is sure. Your Father is pleased that you wanted to please Him. Keep your heart away from desiring the applause of men. He will applaud you in due time!

I remember a woman in the church at one time that came to me with some real genuine needs. She had several children, was estranged from her abusive husband, and had no job and no place to live. She was literally jobless, penniless and homeless.

I was living in a warm home, with plenty of groceries in my refrigerator and married to a man with a good job. I knew it was my Christian duty and my heart's desire to help her all that I could, and that desire I believe was from the Lord.

Over the next several months I spent a lot of time with this new friend. She came to know Jesus and seemed to acknowledge that Christ was her hope for fulfillment in this life. As I saw her respond to the Lord it provoked me to give her even more. I spent a lot of time with her.

One day a thought came to me as she phoned unexpectedly with another need needing to be met, "I'm tired, I'm spent, nobody has even thanked me for all the errands I have run, or the time I've invested in this woman's life and I don't know if she is even appreciative of what I do for her!" If I could have had a trumpet like the hypocrite in the synagogues I would have blown it loud and hard right there in that grocery aisle for a little sympathy!

I was looking for a "verbal thanks" that morning and if I would have gotten it at that moment with my attitude, that "thanks" would have been my reward. Instead, the Lord washed my mouth out with His spiritual soap and my words were changed to, "Yes Lord, I'll serve You Lord, in serving her."

I'm not advocating that we don't take an assessment to determine if a real need exists before we give, (because meeting a physical need without them responding to spiritual guidance isn't always the best thing,) but real needs need our real readiness to give and the Lord will bless those who don't need a trumpet blow, to continue on in giving and serving.

► Read - Prayer: Matthew 6:5-15

Jesus is teaching the disciples how to pray. He did so at their request. In Luke 11:1 we see one of His disciples asking Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

11. The first principle of prayer came in the form of a negative. Who did Jesus tell them *not* to be like? Why? Matthew 6:5-6

I wouldn't want to be on that list. How would you like to be mentioned in scripture as one to be least like? Whew!

12. What was their reward? _____

13. How were they instructed to pray? Matthew 6:6-7 _____

We should all learn how to pray in secret before we pray in public, not so that you can improve you're praying in any way, because we know the Lord isn't impressed with style, but so that we make a practice out of being honest and genuine before God. I'm not sure the Pharisees even had a habit of prayer and worship privately; they were more concerned with looking spiritual than really being spiritual.

I will never forget a time of prayer we had with several brand new believers. One flamboyant young man in particular jumped right out in open prayer within the circle. He was just pouring out his sweetheart before the Lord. The problem was he continued to use his fleshly, unsanctified language when talking to Jesus! We squirmed as we held hands and as he threw in a “cuss word” or two in his heartfelt prayer. I don’t think God squirmed as much as we did that day. Although I believe it was important we shared with him the importance of using different language in his prayer time, I think God saw straight through the bad language into his heart of gold.

14. Do you have a real hesitation with praying in public? Well, your prayer-group is a great place to start! My favorite prayers often come from new prayer warriors. Do you know why? Because their prayers tend to be basic, real and genuine and there is power in those kind of prayers! Ask the Lord to help you with a small beginning in praying out loud. Share with group.

In Matthew 6:9-15 we have what many call “The Lord’s Prayer.” This prayer would better be titled, “The Disciples Prayer”. It was to the disciples that this guideline was given. A non-believer or non-disciple couldn’t pray this prayer because every word speaks of one surrendered to the King. A non-disciple isn’t surrendered to anything. They are self governed.

Notice the order in this prayer:

The first part of the prayer deals with God and His glory. (Setting apart His name, inviting His will into our lives)

The second part of the prayer deals with three human needs. (Bread, forgiveness, help in temptation and the spiritual battle)

15. Worship is a great place to start in prayer. Before the asking, before the crying out with personal needs, begin with worship and exaltation of the Lord’s name. Prayer is not meant to change God’s will to go along with our will; *its purpose is to prepare us for the proper use of His answers*. What are we to pray according to v.10?

Write out what that means in your own words.

 *Let me say that again, “Prayer is to prepare us for the “proper use” of His answers!*

16. Next we are to pray for our personal needs. The three listed here in v.11-13 are; bread, forgiveness and strength in times of temptation and spiritual battle.

Which person of the trinity is responsible for providing for you? See Psalm 78:23-25

Men ate angel's food – Psalm 28:25 sent by God!!!! Crazy - I'm sure nothing could have been more organic, right?

God was reminding the disciples in this prayer that He would supply all their physical needs.

17. In v.12 they are to ask for forgiveness for their debts. Which person of the trinity holds the key to forgiveness? Mark 3:10

18. Which person of the trinity helps us in our struggles over temptation and in our spiritual battles? Acts 1:8 _____

The "disciple's prayer" covers every person in the trinity.

There was a "Rabbinic saying" in those days that went like this, "He who prays within his house surrounds it with a wall that is stronger than iron!"

Our prayers cover our homes with protection and power!

The Lord then closes the example of prayer to the disciples with one last reminder about forgiveness. In v.14-15, Jesus reminds us of the importance of having a heart that will easily forgive. His reasoning is that we have been forgiven so much. How can we hold back forgiveness when we have been forgiven so much?

19. What was Paul's encouragement to the church at Ephesus? Ephesians 4:32

20. In a letter to the church of Colossae, what were Paul's instructions? Paul says, it's a must to do"! Colossians 3:13

There is instruction after instruction in God's Word about the importance that the role forgiveness plays in a believer's life. It's a discipline we had better learn in order to survive in this wicked world without being eaten alive with bitterness and resentment.

Forgiveness is important to prayer because right fellowship with other believers helps determine my fellowship with God. When we are clean before God we CAN pray God's will and be trusted with His answer.

Wrapping it up and making it personal!

It's so refreshing to find sincere, real Christians that aren't embarrassed to admit wrong, that are able to confess sin and ask for accountability from other believers and don't feel the need to *act* like they never struggle in life.

Chuck Swindoll gives this illustration about sincerity in one of his writings. The word "sincere" is actually a Latin word that means "without wax". The ancient Greeks had very fine porcelain which was greatly valued and expensive. Sometimes when they would fire it in the kiln tiny cracks would appear. Dishonest merchants would smear pearly white wax over these cracks so that they would be hidden from view. No one could see the tiny cracks unless you held the porcelain up to the sunlight to expose them. Honest dealers would therefore have to mark their pure porcelain as "sine-cera" or "without wax"; to prove to the buyer that it wasn't a flawed piece of porcelain made to look like it had no imperfections. The world wants to see the real deal, a real normal person who walks with Jesus. Our most powerful testimony is how the Lord takes imperfect people, flawed people and makes them whole through the forgiveness of sin and the transformation of their lives and uses them to bring honor to His name.

I hope you never feel the need to conceal the cracks in your life in order to portray a false righteousness to the rest of the world. That is such a lonely and isolated place to be and if you find yourself there today my friend, may I encourage you to find a sister in Christ whom you trust and go to them in solitude and confess your sin. Make yourself accountable to their counsel. Once a believer joins the ranks of other soldiers that are free to confess their sins to one another, they find healing and true freedom in Christ.

There is no amount of "white wax" that can conceal the sins I have committed. I need something much stronger, something with much more color, like the shade of red, like the blood of Jesus, with all its power! Let's decide to be "real" Christians! Real before one another, real to the lost world and real before our Lord, otherwise it would be accurate for the world to call us hypocrites or imposters!

"Oh Lord, I come to you today, cracks and all and I ask you to use me as your vessel of righteousness in all my imperfection. I don't want to be a phony; I don't want to be a Pharisee or hypocrite. I want to be able to stand tall understanding my righteousness was not determined by anything I did or will do. I'm ok with you and your ok with me because I have accepted the sacrifice of your son that covers all my sin. That is where my righteousness is found! I want to be known by You and by men as a true genuine believer in Jesus Christ! Thank you Sweet Jesus... Amen".

