

Lesson #7- Matthew Chapter 6 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):

Jesus continues in chapter 6 with His sermon on the mount. In every teaching that Jesus takes up, He moves quickly past appearances to an examination of the heart. The disciples Jesus is calling into citizenship in His kingdom will behave and operate by very different standards than the world adheres to.

1. Jewish culture and religion placed a high value on almsgiving, the practice of providing relief to the poor, most often in the form of a monetary gift. Throughout the law and prophets, and extending into the New Testament, the Bible also requires that the poor be cared for. What rules did Jesus lay down for almsgiving and what do you think are the reasons?

Help for Teachers:

- The chapter opens with “take heed”. This is a call to self-evaluate what your motives are when you give for the relief of the poor. It bears noting that just like with praying and fasting, there is an obvious expectation that we will give.
- In Jesus’ day the religious leaders of Israel had traded the praise of God for the praise of men. In verse 2 Jesus says to not “sound a trumpet before thee”. Some scholars have tried to make a case that the Pharisees literally had blowing trumpets go ahead of them as they went to deposit their gifts. Others have said that the offering container was trumpet shaped and made a big commotion when coins were dropped in. There seems to be no significant support for either idea, but just as we would use such language today to express the idea that these givers were flamboyant and determined that they get noticed by the people, so Jesus used this language in a metaphoric way. There is no better way to illustrate the motivation these self-righteous leaders held; Jesus said they wanted the glory of men, they got just that and that was all the reward that would be coming to them. This lesson is for us today, just as much as it applied to those in the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Our giving should be from a heart of love (And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, **and have not charity**, it profiteth me nothing. 1 Cor. 13:3). Just as with the Pharisees 2000 years ago, if we do our giving so that those around will see and talk about how great we are, we have surrendered treasure in heaven for the worthless praise of men.
- Why has God always been so concerned with how His people treat the poor of society? As the image bearers of God (not that we look exactly like God and all other the far-reaching comparisons that have been made to explain that we are “made in His image”, but most importantly were made to bring Him glory by worshipping Him so that all see his majesty), when we reach out in compassion with love to the poor with no expectation of getting anything in return other than God’s approval, we

honor God because that's exactly what He did for us. When we were helpless and hopeless, destitute of anything of any lasting value, and although we were there because of our own foolishness, that's when God came to us with limitless love and compassion. He sacrificed the greatest of all treasures, His Only Begotten Son, so that He could make us not just better, but a peculiar treasure unto Himself. So that He could bring us into His royal family and give us an eternity with Him.

2. What were the three directives Jesus gave concerning prayer, right before giving His disciples an example of how to pray?

Help for Teachers:

- **First-** don't be a hypocrite. The religious leaders of Jesus day loved to "pray" in public areas so that everyone could hear them and think how righteous they were. The Bible records of one such person that he "prayed thusly with himself". His prayers were just an artificial monologue intended to fool the crowd, but God certainly wasn't the focus of his words. **Second-** "enter into thy closet". Jesus taught that when we pray it is not to impress anyone. Our prayers should be to God and external distractions should be sealed out; "and when thou hast shut they door...". This is not to say that corporate prayer is wrong. We have many examples of someone leading a group in prayer in the Bible, particularly in Acts. But the one praying must be careful to remain focused on God and not allow the fact that others are listening to be a distraction or alter his prayers for the purpose of making those listening impressed. **Third-** Don't use vain repetitions. Vain means undo or excessive pride, actions marked by futility or ineffectualness, having no real value. Repeated phrases that are habitual and without thought have no place in our prayers. When we pray our prayers should be honest and with sincerity. Even worse is to adopt religious sounding cliches that we repeat because we think God is impressed by our wording. Rather, here and in other places where we find Jesus' teaching, we learn that we are to come before our Heavenly Father as a child. Consider how children speak to their father that they love and that they are loved by.

3. How would you break down the major teachings from the model prayer? Discuss each.

Help for Teachers:

- ***Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*** A geography lesson for effect: We approach the throne of God with great respect. He is in heaven above; we certainly are not. He is high above us. Can we even know? Where up there is the heaven that God resides in? His very name is Holy and greatly to be revered.
- ***Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*** As we have already discussed, the kingdom of heaven is a subject of great interest to the Jewish people that Matthew targets. The kingdom of God already is (Psalms 103:19). His kingdom rules over all, right now. But until He returns bodily, and the kingdom is manifest to all, we live in this period of God's longsuffering, where God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Obviously during this time, we see that men live as though God doesn't reign and certainly, they disregard His will. We long and pray for the day when Jesus returns and His kingdom is revealed on earth, as it now is in heaven.
- ***Give us this day our daily bread.*** Notice that we ask for "daily" bread. We need Him continually. We must trust God for all our needs, not looking to anyone or anything else to secure our future. We live by faith.
- ***And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*** In light of the great debt of sin that God has forgiven us of, and His ongoing mercy as He continues forgiving us (1 John 1:9), how fitting is it that we in turn forgive those that wrong us, how insulting to His mercy is it if we refuse to forgive others (Matt. 18:21-35). We are to confess our sins and seek forgiveness and He has promised that He will, and because of that we should be quick to forgive others.
- ***And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:*** God never tempts anyone to sin. We sin of our own volition (James 1:13-14). When we are tempted by Satan or our own wickedness, God is faithful to provide a way for us to escape. He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able (1 Cor 10:13). We need to pray for God's deliverance and then bear up under temptation.
- ***For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*** We are to worship God, ascribing all glory to Him. Everything is by Him and for Him and in Him. He could never be exalted enough! We should praise Him when we pray! "[9] *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; [10] That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11] Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; [12] Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: [13] Who hath*

delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: [14] In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: [15] Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: [16] For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: [17] And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. [18] And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. [19] For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" (Colossians 1:9-19)

4. In verses 19-24, Jesus teaches about treasure. What do you think is a good indicator of what you treasure the most?

Help for Teachers:

- We will “serve” who or what we love. That is what our priorities will go to, and our resources will follow. What do we spend our time doing? What do we spend our money on? What are most of our thoughts about? Jesus says we cannot serve two masters. He also asked the question, why do you call me Lord, Lord “and do not the things that I say?” Also see Luke 6:45 and Proverbs 4:23.

5. The chapter ends with Jesus’ teaching about worry. Most everyone agrees that worry is not good, but the wisdom of the world offers council far different than that of Jesus. What did Jesus teach and what other passages of Scripture address worry?

Help for Teachers:

- Worldly wisdom says that you had best plan for a rainy day. That you must rely on yourself and figure out how to provide for your own future, because no one is going to look out for you as well as you can look out for yourself. Jesus said quite the opposite is true for God’s children. We can depend on God to supply the physical things we need (works perfectly with “give us this day”) when we “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness”. When we seek the kingdom of God first, our economic values change. Our “needs” are redefined. Paul found it his reality to be content in whatsoever state he found himself, and certainly Paul had seen hard times, physically speaking, in his ministry for the kingdom. In 1 Timothy 6:5-10 Paul shares with Timothy (and us) the perspective we should have on worrying over

worldly wealth. I think it is also important to note that Jesus doesn't say to seek righteousness. He says to seek "his" righteousness. Having no righteousness of our own, His righteousness is "counted unto us", as it was to Abraham (Romans 4:3), when we believe Him. His blessings are bestowed on us when we have faith in God. Remember, we are not talking about material blessings, we are talking about heavenly treasure. God will "supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus". That's not a run-on sentence; Christ Jesus **is** all you *need*. In the economy of the kingdom, we may *need* to do without because of persecution and die, and many have, but great is your reward in heaven (Matt 5:12).