

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
7-12-23

Matthew 6

Jesus' Warning Against Doing Good To Be Seen By Others – Verse 1

¹ “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

6:1 Jesus tells us to not do righteous things for the sake of display or image to be seen by others. The idea is when we do righteous deeds for the attention and applause of men, their attention and applause is our reward. It is much better to receive a reward from your Father in Heaven.

Examples Of The Wrong Kind Of Giving And The Right Kind Of Giving – Verses 2-4

² “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

6:2 The term hypocrites, as used here, describes people who do good acts for appearances only—not out of compassion or other good motives. Their actions may be good, but their motives are hollow. These empty acts are their only reward, but God will reward those who are sincere in their faith.

6:3 When Jesus says not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, he is teaching that our motives for giving to God and to others must be pure. It is easy to give with mixed motives, to do something for someone if it will benefit us in return. But believers should avoid all scheming and give for the pleasure of giving and as a response to God's love. Why do you give?

6:3-4 It's easier to do what's right when we gain recognition and praise. To be sure our motives are not selfish, we should do our good deeds quietly or in secret, with no thought of reward. Jesus says we should check our motives in three areas: generosity (6:4), prayer (6:6), and fasting (6:18). Those acts should not be self-centered but God-centered, done not to make us look good but to make God look good. The reward God promises is not material, and it is never given to those who seek it. Doing something only for ourselves is not a loving sacrifice. With your next good deed, ask, would I still do this if no one would ever know I did it?

Examples Of The Wrong Kind Of Prayer And The Right Kind Of Prayer – Verses 5-6

⁵ “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

6:5-6 Some people, especially the religious leaders, wanted to be seen as “holy,” and public prayer was one way to get attention. Jesus saw through their self-righteous acts, however, and taught that the essence of prayer is not public style but private communication with God. There is a place for public prayer, but to pray only where others will notice you indicates that your real audience is not God.

6:6 Some have concluded that Jesus’ directions about private prayer call into question all public prayer. Jesus’ own practice indicates this wasn’t his intention. The Gospels record Jesus at prayer both privately (14:23) and publicly (14:18-19). Again, Jesus was drawing attention to the motives behind actions. The point really wasn’t a choice between public and private prayer but between heartfelt and hypocritical prayer. When asked to pray in public, focus on addressing God, not on how you’re coming across to others.

The Right Way To Pray – Verses 7-8

⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

6:7-8 Repeating the same words over and over like a magic incantation is no way to ensure that God will hear your prayer. It’s not wrong to come to God many times with the same requests—Jesus encourages persistent prayer. But he condemns the shallow repetition of words that are not offered with a sincere heart. We can never pray too much if our prayers are honest and sincere. Before you start to pray, make sure you mean what you say.

The Model Prayer – Verses 9-13

⁹ “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

6:9 The phrase “Our Father in heaven” indicates that God is not only majestic and holy but also personal and loving. The first line of this model prayer is a statement of praise and a commitment to hallow, or honor, God’s holy name. We can honor God’s name by being careful to use it respectfully. If we use God’s name lightly, we aren’t remembering God’s holiness.

6:10 The phrase “Your kingdom come” is a reference to God’s spiritual reign, not Israel’s freedom from Rome. God’s kingdom was announced in the covenant with Abraham (8:11; Luke 13:28), is present in Christ’s reign in believers’ hearts (Luke 17:21), and will be complete when all evil is destroyed and God establishes the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1).

6:10 When we pray “Your will be done,” we are not resigning ourselves to fate but praying that God’s perfect purpose will be accomplished in this world as well as in the next. And how does God accomplish his will on earth? He does it largely through people willing to obey him. This part of the prayer allows us to offer ourselves as doers of God’s will, asking him to guide, lead, and give us the means to accomplish his purposes.

6:11 When we pray “Give us today our daily bread,” we are acknowledging that God is our sustainer and provider. It is a misconception to think that we provide for our needs ourselves. We must trust God daily to provide what he knows we need.

6:13 God sometimes allows us to be tested by temptation. As disciples, we should pray to be delivered from these trying times and for deliverance from Satan (“the evil one”) and his deceit. All Christians struggle with temptation. Sometimes it is so subtle that we don’t even realize what is happening to us. God has promised that he won’t allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Ask God to help you recognize temptation and to give you strength to overcome it and choose God’s way instead.

More On The Importance Of Forgiveness – Verses 14-15

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

6:14-15 Jesus gives a startling warning about forgiveness: If we refuse to forgive others, God will also refuse to forgive us. Why? Because when we don’t forgive others, we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God’s forgiveness. God’s forgiveness of sin is not the direct result of our forgiving others, but it is based on our realizing what forgiveness means (see Ephesians 4:32). It is easy to ask God for forgiveness but difficult to grant it to others. Whenever we ask God to forgive us for sin, we should ask, have I forgiven the people who have wronged me?

The Right Way To Fast – Verses 16-18

16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

6:16 Fasting—going without food in order to spend time in prayer—is noble and difficult. It gives us time to pray, teaches self-discipline, reminds us that we can live with a lot less, and helps us appreciate God’s gifts. Jesus was not condemning fasting, but hypocrisy—fasting in order to gain public approval. Fasting was mandatory for the Jewish people once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:32). The Pharisees voluntarily fasted twice a week to impress the people with their “holiness.” Jesus commended acts of self-sacrifice done quietly and sincerely. He wanted people to adopt spiritual disciplines for the right reasons, not from a selfish desire for praise.

The Choice Between Two Treasures – Verses 19-21

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

6:20 Storing up treasures in heaven is not limited to tithing but is accomplished by all acts of obedience to God. There is a sense in which giving our money to God’s work is like investing in

heaven. But we should seek to please God not only in our giving but also in fulfilling God's purposes in all we do.

6:21 Jesus made it clear that having the wrong treasures leads to our hearts being in the wrong place. What we treasure the most controls us, whether we admit it or not. If possessions or money become too important to us, we must re-establish control or get rid of items. Jesus calls for a decision that allows us to live contentedly with whatever we have because we have chosen eternal values over temporary, earthly treasures.

The Choice Between Two Visions – Verses 22-23

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

6:22-23 Spiritual vision is our capacity to see clearly what God wants us to do and to see the world from his point of view. But this spiritual insight can be easily clouded. Self-serving desires, interests, and goals block that vision. Serving God is the best way to restore it. A “healthy” eye is one that is fixed on God.

The Choice Between Two Masters – Verse 24

24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

6:24 Jesus says we can have only one master. We live in a materialistic society where many people serve money. They spend all their lives collecting and storing it, only to die and leave it behind. Their desire for money and what it can buy far outweighs their commitment to God and spiritual matters. Whatever you store up, you will spend much of your time and energy thinking about. Don't fall into the materialistic trap, because “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). Can you honestly say that God, and not money, is your master? One test is to ask yourself which one occupies more of your thoughts, time, and efforts.

6:24 Jesus contrasted heavenly values with earthly values when he explained that our first loyalty should be to those things that do not fade, cannot be stolen or used up, and never wear out. We should not be fascinated with our possessions, lest they possess us. God alone deserves to be our master. Either we store our treasures with God (6:20-21), focus our “eyes” on him (6:22-23), and serve him alone—or else we do not serve him at all. Where does your ultimate allegiance lie?

Do Not Worry – Verses 25-30

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

6:25 Because of the ill effects of worry, Jesus tells us not to worry about those needs that God promises to supply. Worry may (1) damage your health, (2) disrupt your productivity, (3) negatively affect the way you treat others, and (4) reduce your ability to trust in God. How many ill effects of worry are you experiencing? Here is the difference between worry and genuine concern—worry immobilizes, but concern moves you to action.

6:26-30 God provides for the birds, and He takes care of them. God even takes care of the grass of the field. Therefore, we should expect that God would take care of us. The worry many people have over the material things of life is rooted in a low understanding of their value before God. They don't comprehend how much He loves and cares for them.

You Have A Heavenly Father That Knows Your Needs – Verses 31-32

³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

6:31-32 We are invited to know a freedom from the worry and anxiety that comes from undue concern about material things. Jesus contrasted the life of those who do not know God and are separated from Him with those who do know God and receive His loving care. Those who know God shouldn't seek after other things.

Put God's Kingdom First – Verses 33-34

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

6:33 To "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" means to put God first in your life, to fill your thoughts with his desires, to take his character for your pattern, and to serve and obey him in everything. What is really important to you? People, objects, goals, and other desires all compete for priority. Any of these can quickly become most important to you if you don't actively choose to give God first place in every area of your life.

6:34 Planning for tomorrow is time well spent; worrying about tomorrow is time wasted. Sometimes it's difficult to tell the difference. Careful planning is thinking ahead about goals, steps, and schedules, and trusting in God's guidance. When done well, planning can help alleviate worry. Worriers, by contrast, are consumed by fear and find it difficult to trust God. They let their plans interfere with their relationship with God. Don't let worries about tomorrow affect your relationship with God today.