

---

***Called to Serve, Give, Pray, Bless and Fast (Mt. 6:1-21)***

**I. REVIEW: INTRODUCTION**

A. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' most comprehensive statement on a believer's role in cooperating with the grace of God. It the "litmus test" to measure our spiritual development and ministry impact. Jesus called us to cultivate ***eight beatitudes*** (5:3-12) as we pursue ***100-fold obedience*** (5:48), ***resist six temptations*** (5:21-48), and ***pursue five kingdom activities*** (6:1-21).

B. He describes *five kingdom activities* that position us to receive more grace: ***serve*** and ***give*** (charitable deeds: service and/or money (6:1-4, 19-21), ***pray*** (6:5-13), ***bless adversaries*** (full forgiveness, 6:14; 5:44), and ***fast*** (6:16-18), leading to rewards from God (Mt. 6:4, 6, 18, 20). Other activities exist, but Jesus chose these five.

***<sup>4</sup>That your charitable deed [serving or giving money; v. 20] may be in secret; and your Father...will reward you openly...<sup>6</sup>When you pray...your Father...will reward you openly ...<sup>14</sup>Forgive men their trespasses...<sup>17</sup>When you fast...<sup>18</sup>your Father...will reward you openly. <sup>19</sup>Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...<sup>20</sup>but treasures in heaven... (Mt. 6:4-20)***

C. These *five spiritual activities* are very ***small in action***, ***weak as we do them***, and ***simple to understand***, but when combined by the Spirit's power they ***help people***, ***move God*** and ***change us*** over time.

D. Spiritual disciplines don't earn God's love, but allow us to receive more from God. He does not love us more because we do them (legalism), but is able to give more to our heart as we embrace these activities (1 Pet. 5:5).

***<sup>6</sup>He gives more grace...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (Jas. 4:6)***

A. The eight Beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12) are expressed in all five kingdom activities (Mt. 6:1-21).

1. ***Being poor in spirit***: seeing our need for breakthroughs in our heart, ministry, church, and city
2. ***Mourning for breakthrough***: being desperate enough to be extreme in pursuing breakthroughs
3. ***Walking in meekness***: having a servant spirit in the use of our resources (time, money, etc.)
4. ***Hungering for righteousness***: consistently seeking God for breakthroughs of His kingdom
5. ***Showing mercy***: treating others with a tender spirit when they fail, attack, or disappoint us
6. ***Being pure in heart***: seeking to walk in purity in our thoughts, words, and motives
7. ***Becoming a peacemaker***: bringing peace or healing to broken relationships
8. ***Enduring persecution***: bearing the stigma and pressures of standing for righteousness

**II. WARNING: LIVING BEFORE THE EYES OF PEOPLE**

A. Jesus provides ***one warning***: hypocritically drawing attention to our devotion and passion for God.

B. He was speaking directly to the Pharisees (Mt. 23:5-7), who operated in public with a religious spirit. He was also addressing our natural temptation to "sound a trumpet" and promote ourselves by drawing attention to how devoted, passionate, "anointed," smart, diligent, and generous we are.

***<sup>2</sup>Do not sound a trumpet...as the hypocrites [Pharisees] do in the synagogues [worship or prayer services] and in the streets [out in public] that they may have glory from men. (Mt. 6:2)***

**III. PROMISE OF REWARDS: LIVING BEFORE GOD'S EYES**

- A. He *promised* that we will be rewarded for engaging these activities. The major truth to Matthew 6 is that God sees and rewards. He's attentive and responds in generosity in this age and in the next. We get rewarded twice!
- B. If Jesus highlighted these activities as ways we can partner with God's grace, then we need to pay attention to them, even if they seem small, "out-dated" or uncomfortable.
- C. Jesus emphasized that the Father *will openly reward* these activities. Some of the rewards are *external*, as circumstances are changed by God's power. Some are *internal*, as our hearts encounter Him and are tenderized. Some are *eternal*, affecting our destiny in the age to come.
- D. We do these five kingdom activities with *confidence in His rewards* (temporal and eternal). We must have confidence that His eyes are on us and that He is responsiveness to us (Heb. 11:6). One major way we stop doing these things is because we lose sight of He sees us...

***<sup>6</sup>Without faith [confidence in God] it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)***

- E. *Jesus taught more on eternal rewards than any other man in Scripture* (Mt. 5:5, 12, 19; 6:4-6, 18-20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 18:4; 19:21, 28-30; 20:16, 27; 22:14; 23:11; 25:21-23; Mk. 9:41; 10:21, 42-43; Lk. 6:23, 35; 9:48; 12:21, 33; 14:11; 16:11; 18:14, 22; 19:17-19; 22:26-30; Jn. 12:26; Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-28; 3:4-5, 9, 11-12, 18, 21; 11:18; 16:5; 19:7-8; 22:12). When we serve, give, pray, bless and fast for the Lord, Jesus takes it personal. We may feel like it made little impact, but to the Lord, it was very important.

***<sup>4</sup>Your charitable deed...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mt. 6:4)***

***<sup>6</sup>When you pray...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mt. 6:6)***

***<sup>18</sup>Fasting...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mt. 6:18)***

- F. *Jesus highlights the motivation by which we do these activities:* Are we doing them for people to see or for God to see? Doing them for God by keeping them hidden allows for the purity of the actions and good fruit to be produced by them. We actually grow the things in our inner life that we feed. If we "feed" doing things for God, then we will strengthen our hearts to live righteously in all other areas when no one is looking.
- G. Which audience are we living before and whose applause are we seeking? We should live with "eye service" to the Lord. If we stop doing these activities because of a lack of human recognition or increased human criticism, we have done things for men (Eph. 6:6-8). Many believers never "shift over" to living before His eyes. This is where power and transformation occur in our life.

## IV. THE FASTED LIFESTYLE: EMBRACING VOLUNTARY WEAKNESS

- A. The *Sermon on the Mount* lifestyle is called the *fasted lifestyle*. We fast our strength by embracing voluntary weakness to experience more of *God's power*. Jesus spoke of ***the paradox*** to Paul (2 Cor. 12:9). God was not referring to moral weakness of Paul but in the weakness he experienced when preaching the gospel.
- <sup>9</sup>My grace [power] is sufficient for you [Paul], for My strength is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor. 12:9)***
- B. There are five types of “fasting” in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:1-18). We fast food, time, energy, money, and words by *giving, serving, praying, blessing enemies, and fasting food*. Each is a form of fasting, in which we voluntarily embrace weakness to experience more of God's power.
1. *In giving*, we fast our money and financial strength.
  2. *In serving and prayer*, we fast our time and energy, investing it in others and in intercession.
  3. *In giving up food*, we fast our physical and emotional strength.
  4. *In blessing our enemies*, we fast our words and reputation.
- C. Fasting is normal and basic to the Christian life—it is not *radical Christianity*. It is not possible to live biblical Christianity without being committed to a lifestyle of praying, fasting, giving, serving, and blessing enemies.
- D. Some mistake these five godly activities as “optional,” because the Church has emphasized an aspect of the gospel of grace, while neglecting how we partner with God's grace. (Mat. 5:19; 16:24-28; 1 Cor. 3:14-15) Many settle only for being forgiven and saved from their sins.
- E. We reach for the Lord when doing these activities, even though we may not do them perfectly. These five activities are an “easy yoke” that give us a vibrant spirit—versus being dead in their spirit and oppressed.

## V. CHARITABLE DEEDS: CALLED TO SERVE AND GIVE (MT. 6:1-4, 19-21)

- A. We are called to ***serve*** and ***give*** (Mt. 6:1-4, 19-21). Charitable deeds refer to acts of servanthood and financial giving. They encompass investments of time or money to serve people in God's will as well as the poor.
- <sup>1</sup>Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds [giving service or money; v. 20] before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup>Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues [public meetings] and in the streets [marketplace]... Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. (Mt. 6:1-4)***
- B. When we give our money, Jesus tells us later that we are investing for the future age (Mt. 6:19-21).
- <sup>19</sup>Do not lay up...treasures on earth...<sup>20</sup>lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. (Mt. 6:19-20)***
- C. Jesus spoke of not letting our “left hand” know what our “right hand” is doing, meaning not to draw extra attention to ourselves. Not all giving in the early church was hidden (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 5:1-10; 11:29-30). The point is about our motivation to be as unobtrusive as possible, not to fear if anyone finds out.

## VI. CALLED TO PRAY (MT. 6:5-13)

- A. Jesus calls us to pray (Mt. 6:5-8). There are many forms of prayer: *intercession, supplication, confession, praise, declaration, conversation and inquiry*, as well as *meditation on the Word*. Jesus taught us how to pray by giving us the Lord's prayer (Mt. 6:9-13). The God of the universe wants to talk to you and hear from you.

***<sup>5</sup>When you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites...standing in the synagogues and...the streets, that they may be seen by men...they have their reward. <sup>6</sup>When you pray, go into your room...pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mt. 6:5-6)***

- B. Prayer is an expression of voluntary weakness that fasts our time and emotions. Instead of using all our time for the advancement of our status or success, we use some of it to seek God for ourselves and for others. Instead of using most of our free time being entertained by media, we pray. In this, we forego opportunities to network and build up our ministries or businesses.
- C. Part of the reward that God gives is in greater intimacy with Him; part of it is in increased productivity and fruitfulness that may only be seen decades later. Jesus was not banning corporate prayer meetings—the early church prayed together (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 12:5; 16:13). He was warning us not to draw attention to ourselves related to our prayer alone or in worship meetings.

## VII. CALLED TO BLESS (MT. 6:14-15)

- A. We are called to bless our adversaries as part of expressing the fullness of forgiveness (Mt. 6:14-15; 5:44). This is connected with the call to resist passive love (Mt. 5:21-42). Jesus elaborates on the implications of forgiving our enemies (Mt. 6:14-15).

***<sup>15</sup>If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you... (Mt. 6:15)***

***<sup>44</sup>Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you... (Mt. 5:44)***

- B. The call to actively love our enemies includes our words (bless) before them and when they are absent, actions (do good), and prayers. Our enemies are adversaries, who seek to hurt or hinder us, or who hope to see us fail.

## VIII. CALLED TO FAST (MT. 6:16-18)

- A. We are called to fast (Mt. 6:16-18). Jesus said, “*When you fast*” not “*if you fast*,” implying that it should occur in the regular course of a disciple's life. We do not fast to motivate God to love us, but to increase our spiritual capacity to receive and feel more of His heart, Word, and power.

***<sup>16</sup>When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance...that they may appear to men to be fasting...<sup>17</sup>But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mt. 6:16-18)***

- B. Jesus emphasized that the Father ***will reward*** fasting. This proclamation makes fasting important. Jesus called us to fast because He knows that its rewards will far outweigh its difficulties. The greatest breakthroughs in individuals, families, communities and regions comes through prayer and fasting.