

Bible Study 2022-2023

Class #22

3/7/21

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:16-18** *“And when you fast,...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you”*
 - Father suggested that this part of the Sermon on the Mount was very important for us right now in the midst of Lent
 - He suggested that Modern Christians have a tendency to collapse all the stories about Jesus’ “anointing” into the single story of Mary pouring oil over His head
 - But, anointing was a very common practice at the time, since they did not have soap for cleansing

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Instead, they used scented (or olive) oil as we use soap to offset the smell of the body
- When one went to someone's house for dinner, a servant would clean the feet of the guest with water, and then pour oil on them
- Sometimes, they would do this to their head as well
- *"To wash your face and anoint your head,"* meant to clean oneself up before going out
- If one looked disheveled, people would know that they were fasting

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Jesus was saying that the whole point of fasting was not to change others into thinking that you are good, but rather to change you
- Fasting, does not change God!
- God is immutable, (He does not change) which is one of His most important attributes
- Unfortunately, it is also the attribute many of us ignore
- We are okay with omnipotent, all powerful, omnipresent, but so much with immutable

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Many ask: *“If that is so, why do I pray to or fast for Him?”*
- If He won't change, then, I am wasting my time?
- If I am not making God happy, why am I doing all this miserable stuff?
- Father pointed out that we do these things so that we will change
- These acts can be compared to doing calisthenics to get into better shape

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Your body wants something, you deny it, and your body becomes more fit
- The same applies to what these mortifications do to your soul (spiritual push ups)
- It is an exercise in willpower (you see the temptation coming and you have the power to turn away)
- Father suggested that fasting should start with something very small, and then slowly work your way to a greater fast
- There are monks who do not eat anything during the entire first week of Lent, and usually they do it again during Holy Week

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Father compared this to training soldiers for combat
- Thus, the spiritual soldier who exercises their willpower regularly will be able to do this
- This leads one to be able to resist sin (the temptation to do something that is probably not so bad, and it will make me feel better, but is wrong)
- The opposite of resisting sin or resisting temptation is the intellect driving the body and saying no, not now, that is not good for you

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:19-21** *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth,,...For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”*
 - We are not exactly sure what “rust” means in this passage
 - Father said that as a child he thought this meant that their treasures were made of iron!
 - Obviously, silver, gold, or diamonds do not rust
 - The Greek word here is *broxis* which means: **food, rust, eat, eating, or meal**
 - Thus, there are different translations: Some use the word “worms” (note in RSV), “Wormwood” (in the Jerusalem Bible); others say “rodent”

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Father said that some have indicated that “treasures” could have been gold, silver, or even fine clothing (usually made of cotton or wool – thus the idea of moths)
- Jesus tells them to *“lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”*
- Thus, our treasure in heaven will be “being with God”
- Paul will show us that this is about our “hope” for our future glory, or the inheritance that awaits us in Heaven (where for Paul, Jesus was located)

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- But, (Paul says), “This will come to us, for we are not going to go to it”
- Our heavenly reward will be brought to the earth in our “bodily resurrection”
- **Romans 8** and **Revelation 20-22** discuss this in detail
- The hope that we have laid up in Heaven, this inheritance that is reserved for us in Heaven, is “Jesus”

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- The resurrected Jesus will return from heaven, and raise us from the dead, and then we will share in His glory, which is His bodily resurrection (keep your eyes on your eternal reward)
- The day of your resurrection and judgment is what is coming after that rather than earthly pleasures which are temporary

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:22-24** *“The eye is the lamp of the body....You cannot serve God and mammon”*
 - In this context, “mammon” is understood to mean “the world”
 - Father reminded us of this context, as it says that we will have treasures on earth (earthly rewards) versus heavenly rewards (God versus mammon)
 - Jesus was calling them to be concerned about things of God, not the things of the world
 - Why worry about things that are temporary, instead of things that are eternal ? (This is the basic theme of the entire passage)

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:25-29** *“Therefore I tell you,...even Solomon in all his glory is not arrayed like one of these”*
 - Jesus is giving us a hierarchy of importance here (He is not saying that clothing or the body are irrelevant)
 - He is saying that we need to be concerned about our future body, or what is coming
 - Be more concerned about your soul than your body as it will determine the state of your body at the end
 - Do not be as concerned about now as later

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- Jesus does not mean to disregard the now (as a Dualist would)
- He is not saying, “don’t eat, but don’t let what you are going to eat drive who and what you are”
- Since God feeds the animals, don’t you think that He will take care of you?
- He is saying that we need to put our priorities straight

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- **Matthew 6:30-34** *“But if God so clothes the grass of the field,...Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day”*
 - These were the things that the Gentiles focused on
 - Your Heavenly Father knows that you need food, clothes and a home
 - But, He calls us to seek first His kingdom and righteousness
 - Father pointed out that it did not say, “instead”
 - This can be understood in the story of Solomon

Matthew 6 (Cont)

- In 1st Kings, we see Solomon asking for **wisdom** rather than worldly riches
- He sought the Kingdom of God first, and then God gave him all the rest
- This does not mean that if you are righteous God will give you a Ferrari!
- He may provide you a 1995 Chevy, if you need transportation
- What we need to be concerned about is seeking righteousness, and the Kingdom of God, and then let Him take care of all that other stuff
- We will now turn to **Matthew 7**

Matthew 7

- **Matthew 7:1-5** *“Judge not that you be not judged....and they you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye”*
 - In this passage, Jesus is talking about “judgment” or discernment or criticism
 - He was advising His disciples on how to judge others
 - He explained that the way they judged others would be how God would judge them
 - This should remind them (and us) how this principle was applied to being “merciful”
 - Further, He was warning them not to judge another person’s strength (or weakness) of Faith, as they might be in the same condition before God

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- It is easy to look at and judge someone else
- Father said that this did not mean that we should not correct someone who had sinned
- As Christians, we (in charity) need to help others understand what is right from wrong
- But, this is all about explaining the way to do this, and the purpose for doing it

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Jesus was cautioning them to be careful how they judged others because the measure they judged others will be the measure God would judge them (we already heard this in the Our Father)
- He called them to clean up their own life, before they tried to help others clean up their lives
- Father suggested that it is difficult for all of us to avoid this sin

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- **Matthew 7:6** *“Do not give to dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you”*
 - Once again this is “synonymous parallelism”
 - When we think of “dog,” we most likely will picture our own pet dog, “fluffy”
 - But, at that time, no one (but perhaps a king) would own a dog as a pet
 - For a Jew, there were two animals that were the most “unclean animals” you could imagine: the pig and the dog

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Today, a pig is the technical term meaning an animal that weighs approximately 120 pounds, and is several months old
- The term “hog” or “swine,” means that type of animal
- So, in this passage Jesus is saying that they should not give “dogs” (“pigs” or “hogs”) that which is “holy”
- Jesus went on to them that at times, when we attempted to tell someone the difference between right and wrong, that person might not be disposed to listen
- In that case, it would be a waste of time to counsel them

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Father suggested that, most likely, we have all experienced this, and might have even been mocked for trying to help someone
- Here, Jesus was calling them to be careful in what they did when trying to help other people by giving them judgment or criticism, for depending on how you related it, you might be wasting your time
- Otherwise, it would be like throwing pearls to swine, or bread to dogs
- Don't waste what is precious

Matthew 7 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that this same theme can be found in the **Book of Proverbs** where it says:
 - “Don’t try and correct a fool as it is like trying to tell a story to someone who is half asleep”
 - “Rather correct a wise man and he will thank you for it and become all the more wise”
- Further, the *Didache** presents a reference to not giving communion to the unbaptized, as this would be like throwing pearls to swine
- These are things one should not do, as they would be a waste of time and energy