

Matthew 5:17-6:34 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Where We Are In The Outline of Matthew

II. JESUS' GALILEAN MINISTRY 3-18

E. The Sermon on the Mount 5-7

Chs. 5-7 are called the Sermon on the Mount because of what we read in 5:1.

¹And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.

In ch. 4 we're told that as Jesus had been working His way through the Galilean towns and villages, He'd taught in their synagogues and houses and any place people would gather to hear Him. His message was about the Kingdom of God.

Then, He demonstrated His *authority* to teach by performing many powerful & undeniable miracles.

Here in chs. 5-7, Matthew gives us a sampling of what Jesus taught.

Now that a huge group of people were following Him as He made His way through the area, He took the opportunity to deliver to them a whole discourse on the *nature* of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus did this because the Jews of that day had been led to believe some really unfortunate stuff about the Kingdom.

They believed that when the Messiah came, He would come in flaming judgment from the skies. They expected Him to defeat all their enemies and establish them as the preeminent rulers of the Earth.

In this kingdom, it would be those who had lived lives of exacting obedience in the fine points of the law who would be the Messiah's chief officials.

They would be the greatest and fill elevated positions of honor in the Kingdom.

So a sect of the *ultra-righteous* had developed known as the *Pharisees* who were devoted to keeping the law in its most minute details.

The problem is, their whole emphasis was on the external.

They had completely neglected the *spirit* and *heart* of the law in favor of the *letter* of the Law and had reduced the law from being a reflection of the holiness and justice of God into a dead set of rules and rituals.

The Pharisees saw the Law and their keeping of it as a ladder of self-promotion by which they could climb by their own efforts into positions of greatness in the Kingdom.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pulls the rug out from under those who thought and taught this.

The Sermon on the Mount shows that God intends the Law to be a mirror by which men & women would realize their moral and spiritual bankruptcy and would look to Him for mercy and grace.

And then, having received them, would show them to others.

We ended with vs. 17-20 last week, but I want to begin there tonight because these verses are the real heart and theme of the entire sermon.

3. Jesus Fulfills the Law • 5:17-20

¹⁷“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

¹⁹Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus contrasts false and true righteousness, the sham and the genuine.

He's setting the self-righteousness of the Pharisees alongside the true righteousness that marks those who are living in the Kingdom of God.

First of all – because He spoke with authority and didn't just endlessly quote what others had said as everyone else did in that day, there were those who heard Him and jumped to the conclusion that Jesus was trying to *do away* with the Law of Moses and institute a *new system*.

So He nips that idea in the bud; He did not come to do away with the Law, but to fulfill it and to reveal the Law's true objective; which was not to be a standard by which self-righteous men & women could work their way to heaven, but to reveal their desperate need of salvation and a righteousness not based in works, but *given* by a gracious God and received by humble faith.

There are two kinds of righteousness:

1) Self-righteousness & 2) Gift-righteousness.

Self-righteousness is based on self, on what I do.

It's the good works I perform.

It's my keeping of the Law of God.

And it's my inner motivations for all of that.

Gift-righteousness is something attributed to me by God.

It's His *perfect* righteousness, credited to me.

Self-righteousness is created by my effort and work.

Gift-righteousness is received by faith.

Let me use an example:

Let's say that geologists discover a way to forecast earthquakes and they realize that SoCal is going to be destroyed by a 9.5 shaker sometime next week.

The nearest place of safety will be Dallas. Okay, you have to drive there.

Now, are you going to build a car from spare parts in your garage?

Or are you going to take the gift of a Hummer H2 being made available to any SoCal resident who wants one?

What are you going to trust to get you to Dallas – your hand-made vehicle, or one engineered and built to go the distance?

A day of judgment is coming – a spiritual 9.5 shaker that is going to destroy this fallen world system.

Safety lies in heaven – but how do you think you're going to get there?

In your own hand-made vehicle of goodness?

Let me tell you – if that's what you're trusting in, you're a fool.

God has placed a brand new "JC" at your disposal, and holds out the key to you. All you have to do is take it.

The Pharisees thought they would be greatest in the Kingdom because of their simplistic re-interpretation of the law and claim to have kept it because of all the little self-imposed rules and rituals they had made up.

Jesus said that while they may be teaching the law by their *words*, their example was teaching the people to break the spirit and heart of the law, so instead of being the greatest, they would become the *least* in the kingdom.

Now, in vs. 21-30, Jesus shows how God looks beyond the actions, past the externals, to the *heart* and how the righteousness He gives takes root in one's *character*.

4. Sin is a Heart Issue • 5:21-30

a. 21-26 • murder

21“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.*’ **22**But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.

Since we looked at this in depth just a few weeks ago when we were studying the 10 Commandments, we'll be more summary with it tonight.

Jesus' point is clear – the righteousness God is looking for is more than just outward actions, it's an

issue and posture of the heart.

Nurturing hatred and cultivating an attitude of disdain toward another is sin.

23Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24**leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. **First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.**

This is simple, straightforward direction from the Lord.

If there's *any* broken relationship you've not genuinely attempted to make right, then that interferes with your fellowship with the Lord and you must make it right, or at least do *your* part, what *you* can, to make it right.

Think of it this way; just a moment ago we were contrasting *self*-righteousness with *gift*-righteousness. Gift righteousness is possible because of what God did through Christ.

And *what* did He do? He went to the cross.

He endured horrendous torture; hours of the most intense suffering & humiliation. Think of what Christ endured, all for you & me.

Think about how far God went to be reconciled to us.

If we come to the altar to worship God, and realize our way there was purchased by so great a love, then our hearts *will* be turned to desire reconciliation with those with whom we find ourselves at odds – and we will do all within our power to be restored.

Jesus has more to say about resolving conflicts . . .

25Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, [meaning on the way to court] lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. **26**Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

Jesus is saying *pride* must never keep us from doing what's right and from being reconciled to someone with whom we are at odds.

How many times do we get into a tiff with someone, and later realize we were wrong, but pride keeps us from admitting our error or asking for forgiveness?

Pride lands some people in jail and prison!

Don't be a proud loser! Humble yourself and make things right with those before whom you're wrong.

b. 27-30 • adultery

Now Jesus turns from hatred, conflict & murder to speak about lust & adultery.

27“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not commit adultery.*’

28But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Remember the context, Jesus is re-educating them on what true righteousness is about; it's not just actions, it's *motives* too.

In v. 8, Jesus said it was the pure in heart who will see God and enjoy the Kingdom.

So here He teaches that staying free from the act of adultery isn't enough – because a person can be unfaithful to their spouse *in their heart*.

As we said a few weeks ago, when we were looking at the 10 Commandments – the first look at a person of the opposite sex usually isn't sin, but the second one probably is.

And of course, this verse puts the ban on all forms of sexually-oriented material whose whole aim in production and consumption is to stir up lust, the very thing Jesus nails here.

Now Jesus is going to show just how radical we need to be in our pursuit of this genuine holiness of the heart . . .

29If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. **30**And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Jesus obviously does not mean us to take this literally – no one sins with just one eye or hand!

By using such exaggerated speech, He means us to understand that we **must be radical** in the way we guard our hearts and deal with the issue of indwelling sin.

If the Pharisees were super-careful about such silly things as tithing the seeds off their herb plants, then how much more careful and diligent ought we be in dealing with the issues of true righteousness?

Listen, if underwear commercials on TV cause me to lust and encourage disloyalty to my wife, maybe it would be best to just unplug the tube!

Now, someone might say, “That’s getting a little **fanatical** isn’t it?”

Listen to Jesus’ words – “. . . it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”

I guess fanatical, radical, is what Jesus is calling for when it comes to our devotion to Him and our pursuit of true holiness.

Maybe you ought to put a filter on your internet, or use a good filtered service provider.

Maybe a tracking program that logs all visited sites that someone else can check in on and hold you accountable is what you need.

Maybe you ought not go out with the gang after work.

Having brought up the subject of marriage in v. 27, Jesus goes on to elaborate in vs. 31-32.

5. Marriage is Sacred • 5:31-32

³¹“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

God intends marriage to be for life. In marriage, two become one, and a spiritual bond develops that cannot be dissolved without great trouble and pain.

Jesus’ point here is that marriage is a sacred thing whose boundaries are ordained by God, not man!

What a civil court decides and what God decrees may not be the same thing.

In fact, from God’s perspective, the only event that severs the bonds of marriage is sexual disloyalty, **adultery**.

In such a case, God **permits** the offended spouse the *option* of divorce.

But apart from that – in God’s eyes, though they may go through a *civil* divorce, they are **still married**, and remain thus until one or both have sex with someone else.

And that’s why Jesus said that if a man divorces a woman but there’s been no adultery, and then she re-marries, her union with her new husband would **constitute adultery**, because in God’s eyes the first couple was **still married**.

So the first husband would be virtually giving his wife to another man and in a sense **forcing** her to commit adultery!

The end of v. 32 has been a bit confusing to some people and that confusion has created great heart-ache.

It reads – “. . . whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

Some read this and think that marrying **any** divorced person, for **any** reason, constitutes adultery.

That is **NOT** what Jesus said!

This woman is the one referred to in the preceding clause – the woman who’s been **falsely divorced** from her husband for some reason **other** than adultery.

Not only does **SHE** commit adultery if she remarries, but so does the guy she marries.

A woman who has been divorced **because of adultery** is free of the marital bond to her first husband and so free to remarry!

Before we move on, in 1 Cor. 7, the Apostle Paul adds one more cause for legitimate divorce to adultery – **abandonment**.

If a man or woman just walks away from the spouse and abandons them, the marriage bond is dissolved in God’s eyes.

And if it is dissolved in God’s eyes, then the abandoned spouse is free to re-marry.

Jesus made it a point to deal with this issue of the sanctity of marriage because in His day, marriage

had fallen on hard times.

Even those like the Pharisees who were concerned with personal piety thought *nothing* of getting a divorce.

Divorces were rather common place and easy, not unlike today, even in the church.

6. Oaths • 5:33-37

Now, having spoken of the sanctity of marriage, which is a *covenant*, a promise and oath of companionship, to which God holds a person bound, Jesus moves to speak about oaths in general . . .

33“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ **34**But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; **35**nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. **36**Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. **37**But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

Like marriage, by Jesus’ day, the whole issue of integrity had fallen on hard times. Honesty was nearly lost as a virtue.

Words became weapons to manipulate others with, instead of vehicles for communicating the truth.

In such an environment, the gospel is going to have a hard time!

So Jesus spoke against the practice of using what sounded like oaths meant to guarantee honesty, but were in fact masks behind which people tried to lie, cheat, and steal.

His followers must be those who never resort to the use of oaths because they are known as people whose ‘yes’ means YES!

Truth can only *really* be spoken from someone who IS true!

There’s a popular saying that goes, “All truth is God’s truth.”

Yes, all truth *is* God’s truth – but the truth in the mouth of a deceiver is no longer truth, it’s just facts.

And the facts in the mouth of a liar become tools to deceive – as we saw in the temptation of Jesus a couple weeks ago.

There’s power inherent in the gospel of Jesus Christ; but the power that comes through the witness of a life *changed* by the gospel is awesome.

A famous actor was once the guest of honor at a social gathering where he received many requests to recite favorite excerpts from various literary works.

An old preacher who happened to be there asked the actor to recite the 23rd Psalm.

The actor agreed on the condition that the preacher would *also* recite it.

The actor’s recitation was beautifully intoned with great dramatic emphasis for which he received lengthy applause.

Then the preacher began; his voice was rough and broken from many years of preaching, and his diction was anything but polished.

But when he finished there was not a dry eye in the room.

When someone asked the actor what made the difference, he replied “I know the psalm, but he knows the Shepherd.”

7. Do Good, Not Evil • 5:38-48

38“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ **39**But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. **40**If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. **41**And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. **42**Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

Those who keep the letter of the law, miss its spirit.

When God commanded an *eye for an eye* in the Mosaic Law, he meant to restrain the desire for

revenge not to give people the right to get even!
You know how it is, if you slap my on the cheek, I'm going to slap you on both.
Then you'll slap both mine and poke me in the eye; so I poke **both** yours, and on and on it goes in
a Three Stooges kind of escalation of violence.

An eye for an eye was meant to **limit** damages to what was **just**.

The spirit behind law was **justice**.

But Jesus has been speaking about the need for His followers to be marked by **mercy**, not bare,
brutal justice.

So, instead of the **letter** of the law – He calls His followers to go all the way into the **spirit** of the
law, which rises above bare justice to what is **best for others**, even when they are doing you
harm and mean you ill.

In a nutshell, Jesus says, don't **react to evil with evil** – instead, **do good**, always & only!

We mustn't walk through life being **reactors**; because we are God's people and so new creatures, we
operate out of a different ethic and mode of living.

We don't react, we don't take our cue and lead from the world, we take it from God, and He
always and only does good!

43“You have heard that it was said, ‘*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*’ **44**But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, **45**that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. **46**For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **47**And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? **48**Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Verse 48 isn't a command – it's a **summation**.

If we draw our direction and initiative from God rather than allowing our lives to be determined
by what's around us, reacting to perceived threats, slights, hurts or offenses, **then** we'll be
perfect, completely mature spiritual men and women – fully conformed to the moral image
of our Heavenly Father.

God loves His enemies, and by so doing, turns many of them into children.

What an important and timely word this is for us.

While the modern world moves ever closer to a **victim mentality** we can claim victory through
Christ.

While **victims** blame everyone else for their failures and need, saying they can't help themselves
or the way they live because they're doomed to such by what's been done **to** them –

We can embrace the grace and mercy of God which cleanses us and makes us new creatures in
Christ.

We are free!

Free of having to go through life broken, because God has made us whole.

Free of sin and its evil consequences.

Free to do what's right no matter how difficult the circumstance because circumstances do not
control us –

Rather, our God controls the circumstances.

Don't let others control you!

Don't let their sin and nastiness draw sinful reactions and attitudes from of you.

You are a Child of God! Be who you are and do what that means!

Matthew 6

8. Genuine Piety • 6:1-18

Jesus now speaks directly to the very things the Pharisees were counting on to rack up spiritual points

with God; we call such things, *acts of piety*, or *devotion*.

a. 1-4 • good deeds

¹“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

There was a place at one side of the temple courtyard where the poor would gather to receive charity from those who came to the temple to worship.

God had made it clear in the OT prophets and law that showing kindness to the poor was a good and godly thing.

But the Pharisees had turned such charity into a formal ritual of self-promotion.

They weren't concerned about meeting the needs of the poor so much as in making themselves **LOOK** charitable!

So they would hire a trumpeter to walk ahead of them and blow their trumpet every so often to let people know they were on their way to the temple to give some money away.

As they would walk the streets toward the temple mount, the trumpet would blow, and people would look to see who it was, and they would say, “Oh, look – Hillel is going to help the poor. What a good man he is.”

Then when they arrived at the place of alms at the temple, the trumpeter would stand next to the Pharisee and blow long and hard to announce to all that the giving was now to commence.

And all would look and remark – “Oh how godly and generous Hillel is!”

Jesus says – “Since these guys are giving **TO BE HONORED BY MAN**, they have what they want. But God, well, He credits nothing to them.

But **YOU** – when you give, don't blow a trumpet. Don't angle to be honored by man but by God alone.

And God will reward you in the realm where rewards mean something, in heaven.

I want to say something here that's important for us right now.

It was this passage that prompted us to do things the way we are regarding our building project.

Jesus said - ³But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, . . . [explain]

It's rather perplexing how this teaching of Christ could have been so badly handled over the years in the church.

People are promised a special plaque with their name on it on the *Donor's Wall* if they will give so much.

They can have a pew dedicated to them.

Some churches take “wave offerings;” if you're giving \$100 or more, hold it up and wave it before the Lord and “our ushers will be right over to pick it up.”

All of this is very far from the ideal Jesus gives here.

b. 5-15 • prayer

⁵“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Jesus refers to “hypocrites” in v. 5.

The word means “under a mask” and was the word used for *actors* in that day.

You see, in that day when all drama was live and they couldn’t project a face on a screen, actors wore masks that portrayed an emotion in exaggerated expression so the audience would be better able to follow along.

These masks are the modern symbol of drama and acting to this day.

Because of this, actors were called ‘hypocrites.’

Jesus calls the religious fakers who use external piety as a means of self-promotion – *actors*!

Their piety, their giving, prayers, and even fasting were nothing but religious masks that might fool other people but never fool God.

The Pharisees and scribes of Jesus’ day prayed at set times every day, 9 AM, Noon, and 3 PM.

No matter where they were, when the horn blew announcing the time for prayer, they would stop, spread out their hands, lift their eyes to heaven and then begin . . .

Then they would offer up prayers calculated to do one thing; make those around them say, “Oh how holy!”

Jesus said, they have what they want, the praise of men – but God is not listening, because they aren’t really speaking to Him anyway.

In contrast to the hypocrites, Jesus said, go the other way – make sure your prayer is to God; and if praying with others around is going to present a temptation to you to be a hypocrite, then pray in secret.

Jesus is not prohibiting group or corporate prayer here.

There are numerous other passages where we are encouraged to pray with others.

The point is – keep your prayers focused on God, aimed at Him, not used to impress others.

You know, you can easily tell when someone is praying in such a way that it’s really aimed at the other people around him/her rather than God.

When someone is telling a story in prayer rather than praying.

When the words are directed at “informing” people.

And that leads us to the next verse . . .

⁷And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸“Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

When Jesus spoke of the *hypocrites* in v. 5, he meant the Jewish Pharisees.

When He speaks of the “*heathen*” here in v, 7, He means Gentile unbelievers; even they pray.

A good percentage of the Gentiles of Jesus’ day were deeply religious people; they were *pagan* – meaning they worshiped the idols that were common place throughout the Greek and Roman world.

And according to their beliefs, you the gods to do your bidding by obligating them somehow.

You could obligate them by doing some really, really superior good deed.

Or, you could literally *bug* them to the point where just to shut you up they would do whatever it was you were asking.

By repeating the same prayer again and again, invoking the god’s name, you would wear the deity down.

The Buddhist carry on this tradition in the prayer wheel.

They write out a prayer, and attach it to a wheel which is fastened at the end of a handle.

Then, every time they spin the wheel, it supposed to be another offering of the prayer.

And by sheer volume of prayer going up into the spiritual realm it’s supposed to overwhelm the opposition to its answer and create the reality desired by the one praying.

Hundreds of years ago, when China first opened to Europe, Spanish monks visited the Far East and were exposed to the Buddhist prayer wheel.

They brought the concept back and adapted it to their own use in the practice of the rosary.

Jesus’ point here is that we must not have a *heathenistic* view of prayer that it’s some kind of occult formula for bending the power of the universe to our desires.

And God is not a deity who has to be bugged, pressured, or manipulated into listening to us. He is a loving Father who delights to bless His own and He knows our needs and what we're going to pray for, before we do.

So why then, does God call us to pray?

Because prayer is not so much about informing God and getting Him to do something, as it is about us realizing our desperate need for Him.

Prayer keeps us rooted in Christ and dependent on Him.

When you pray, do you ever find yourself informing God about a situation?

"Lord, right now my friend Jeremy is really struggling at work. He's got this boss who's a real pain and . . ."

Do you ever counsel God on what He needs to do?

"Father, You need to come and get a hold of that boss and scare the *bejebbers* out of him."

When we pray – it would probably be a whole lot better if we just made simple requests of God – listening more to the direction of the Holy Spirit on how to pray than informing God and then telling Him what he needs to do.

This would probably shorten our prayers dramatically!

SHORTEN prayer?!?!? That's a nearly heretical for a pastor to say isn't it!

Look at what Jesus says here in vs. 7 & 8–

7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

We do not impress God with the amount of words or the length of time we spend in prayer.

What we need to do, is simply pray and to pray simply – ABOUT

EVERYTHING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Now, by way of illustration, Jesus shows the disciples how to pray.

9 In this manner, therefore, 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 this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Now, if you just read that as is, it takes all of about 20 seconds.

But Jesus doesn't intend us to offer this up as some kind of rote formula for prayer.

He just said that we are not to offer up vain repetitions.

Rather, this is a model for prayer; a framework we can use topically and then fill in the details.

Since we covered these verses last Sunday, we'll just refer those who weren't here to be a tape or CD.

But let me ask of those who were here – what's the theme that ties all of this prayer together?

[Dependence on God]

Now, Jesus adds a little postscript on to the model prayer . . .

14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

This amplifies and explains something Jesus had said in the prayer in v. 12.

Forgiveness is a *reciprocal relationship*, and Jesus shows in crystal clear terms that our being forgiven *by* God is intimately linked to our being forgiving of others.

Now frankly, this is disturbing because we've been told that we're saved by grace, *apart* from works; so how can our being forgiven by God be contingent on our forgiving others?

This seems to get the cart before the proverbial horse.

Aren't we saved by grace, *apart* from works?

SURE! But let me ask, how is that grace that saves *appropriated* by us?

Through faith! Faith *in what?* Just *generic faith*, or faith in Jesus Christ, that He died **IN OUR**

PLACE – that He took our sins and offenses and bore them on the cross?
God saves us on the basis of what He’s done, not what we do; and we appropriate that gift by faith in what Him.

That faith – the kind of faith that lays hold on God’s grace, frees us **NOT ONLY FROM OUR SIN**, but from the effects of the sins and offenses done *to* us *by* others.

If I refuse to let go of the hurts and offenses that have been inflicted on me, if I feel a right to hold on to them and treasure bitterness toward others, then I fail to lay hold of the grace of God that would free and forgive me.

c. 16-18 • fasting

16“Moreover, when you fast,

Stop right there – notice that Jesus didn’t say, “If you fast.” It’s “When you fast.”

He assumes that as His followers, they will fast.

Look at v. 3 – “When you do a charitable deed.”

V. 5 – “When you pray.”

Now, here – “When you fast;” Jesus sees fasting as normative to the life of faith as giving & praying.

16“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting.

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so 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.

When the Pharisees and scribes would fast, which was every Monday & Thursday, they would wear special plain garments that were stained, soiled and ragged.

Then they would take some ashes and rub them on their face to make them look gray and sallow.

As a finishing touch they’d rough up their hair & suck in their cheeks to look a tad emaciated.

Then they’d go out in public and walk real slowly with their head bowed as if weak from a lack of food.

Again, their sad face was nothing but the actor’s mask and their audience was other people.

Jesus said once again, they have their reward – the comments of the people about how pious they were.

But those who genuinely fast must do so in a way that’s between them and God.

They should look and act as though everything’s normal and it’s a normal day.

Now, why fast? What’s the point in not eating and what impact does that have on the spiritual realm?

As you look at the OT, fasting was done by God’s people for several reasons.

It was done for seeking direction from God.

It was done to affect deliverance, and other reasons.

But the main theme that ties all fasting together is that it sharpen one’s spiritual perception.

Some times the only way to do that is by denying the body for a time.

When you fast, you realize just how big a demand the body places on you.

And when you say “No” to it, spending that time instead on focusing on the spirit and prayer, you begin to realize the depth and reality of what it means to be a spiritual person as much as a physical being.

I encourage you to try fasting if you’ve not done it before.

Right now, as we are in this 40 days of prayer, several of us are fasting during the daylight hours on Tuesdays.

9. Sensual vs. Spiritual • 6:19-34

Now Jesus moves to speak about mankind’s perennial battle with the sensual and with the age old struggle of defining our lives by the world’s ideas of success.

a. 19-21 • true treasure

19“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; **20**but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus places the challenge and choice of treasure before them and us.

What’s our bottom-line?

In the business world, it’s all about the *bottom-line*; about whether or not the final figure below the sum-line is black or red ink.

It’s no different in the Kingdom of God – God’s interested in our bottom line too.

Not *how much*, but *what*? What’s our bottom line?

Is what we put our treasure in money, physical possessions, position, power?

Or is our treasure, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit?

Are we investing ourselves in the passing things of this world or the eternal things of God?

I don’t own stock – my foray into stocks was short-lived.

I got a hot tip from a friend and invested a whopping hundred dollars in a penny stock, and promptly watched it go from my buy in rate of 17 cents to less than a penny.

But you know what, while **I NEVER** paid any attention to the stock market prior to my investment, once I had a hundred bucks in it, I read the stock report every day!

Suddenly I was interested in not just my stock, but the whole field I was invested in.

I had a small slice of my earthly treasure invested in the market, so that’s where my heart was.

Jesus is not saying here that we ought to sell everything we have and give it all to charity or the church.

He’s saying that we ought not define our lives and put our real value in the things of this world because this world is temporary and transitory.

So, we ought to use earthly wealth *wisely*, and with an aim toward investing in those things that will bear lasting return.

For instance, when it’s time to buy some clothes, is the label what’s important to you; is being seen in the “right clothes” a deciding factor on where you shop and what you buy?

If so, then you’ll probably fork out two to three times as much as you *need* to spend.

If the Kingdom of God is of greater importance than being seen in the right label, then you’ll shop for quality clothing at the best price and give what you save to the work of the Kingdom.

There’s a real practical way this is going to work out for some of us here at Calvary Chapel of Oxnard over the next year or two.

Because of what the Lord will say to some about what He wants them to do for the building project, it will mean putting off buying that new car for another year.

For others it will mean delaying that special vacation for a couple years or deferring that room addition.

Some will be moved to give up something as simple as eating out so often, or yes, even changing labels.

They will choose to invest in the building project, and provide a new facility for the work of the Kingdom of God here in VC.

b. 22-23 • the trap of sensuality

22“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. **23**But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

The key to understanding this is to keep it in its context and to connect it to what Proverbs say about the “bad” or “evil eye.”

The verses before and after these two verses deal with *earthly wealth & worldly success*.

In v. 23, the word “bad” is the Greek word ‘poneros’ which means *morally* bad; ‘evil’ would be a better translation.

As Jesus used this word, His disciples would immediately think of the Proverb – 28:22

A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him.

Jesus is saying that how we define our lives determines what morality we will live by.

If we look to this world as the end all and be all of our existence, then we will live in moral and spiritual darkness.

But if we look to the Lord and His kingdom as the purpose and context of our lives then we’ll know enlightenment.

Really, by “eye” here, Jesus means the fleshly eye of lust vs. the spiritual eye of faith.

c. 24 • only one master

24“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

“Mammon” was an Aramaic word which may have been the name of an idol promising worldly wealth, sensuality & success.

Jesus uses it here as the personification of everything He’s calling His followers to shun.

And in this verse He’s telling them that the pursuit of God and the pursuit of worldly wealth and success are mutually exclusive.

You can’t love and serve God at the same time that you love and serve the world.

You have to make a decision on who you’re going to live for.

d. 25-34 • worry

25“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

31“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Faith in God frees us from worry about all the things the one who doesn’t believe in God is consumed with: food, clothes, shelter.

Jesus spells it out – following Him means making the rule of God over our lives our bottom-line, our main priority.

If we do that, then God pledges Himself to take care of all those things we could, but don’t worry about.

There once was a man who lived in a small city where everyone knew each other.

This man was consumed with anxiety, he worried about everything; the weather, the economy, his health, earthquakes, tornados, floods, foreign invasion, alien invasions, you name it, he

worried about it.

For years, his neighbors and friends tried to help him, but to no avail.

Then one day he was seen walking down the street smiling & whistling and saying a cheery hello to everyone he passed.

Everyone was speechless.

When he passed by the barber's window, he waved and smiled.

The barber ran out onto the sidewalk and said, "Jack, is that you?"

Jack turned around and said, "Sure is William!"

The barber said, "What happened? You look so, so, well, happy."

Jack said, "Well, I'm no longer all worked up with anxiety."

The barber said, "I can see that, what'd you do?"

Jack said, "I hired a guy to worry for me – Now he does all my worrying and I'm free."

William, the barber replied, "Wow. That's brilliant, I guess. How much do you pay him?"

Jack said, "He wasn't easy to find him, but I pay him \$6 million a year."

William was stunned, "6 Million! – Jack, you don't make more than what, 14 or 15 thousand dollars a year yourself. How are you going to pay him?"

To which Jack replied, "That's for him to worry about."

Jesus asks a great question in v. 27 – "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?"

What does worry accomplish? Nothing!

It is completely worthless emotion energy.

How much better to turn all that emotion to something positive, something our emotions were actually designed for – the worship and pursuit of God.