

Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2019 5:06 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Matthew 6

"Pray, then, in this way: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name! Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors! And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil! For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever! Amen! (Matthew 6:9-13)

Matthew 6 continues the so-called "Sermon on the Mount" where, on a high place in the region of Galilee, Jesus talks to His disciples (and the surrounding crowd) about what it means to be a true disciple of His; basically living life with an eternal perspective! Last week, in Matthew 5, we saw how Jesus began with the "beatitudes," which describe the "attitudes (as well as actions) that His disciples (and we too as "believers" and followers of Christ today!) should have and increasingly show toward ourselves, toward God, and others, as well as to our world! These "character qualities," we said, shouldn't be viewed as things we need to do in order to be accepted by God (and thus gain "salvation")--since the Bible (in Titus 3:5-6) makes it clear that "it's not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy that He has saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit"! Nevertheless, these are the kinds of motives, and "desires of the heart," (and, yes, actions!) that should increasingly characterize our lives as believers, as a work of the Holy Spirit who indwells the life of every believer!

Matthew 6 begins with a basic "principle" that Jesus gives, in verse one, that sets the tone the rest of the chapter: "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven!" (Interestingly, Matthew 6 closes, in verse 33, with Jesus' admonition that we're to "seek His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you"!)!

MacArthur writes that all the acts that are the subject of Matthew 6--which focus initially on giving and praying and fasting--are "supposed to be acts of worship rendered to God, never displays of self-righteousness to gain the admiration of others"!

Giving to the poor (vs. 2-4)? "Shepherd's Notes" notes that Jewish Law did not require "alms-giving"--and so it was considered especially "praise-worthy" by the Pharisees, and others, if they did it! Giving with the sound of trumpets was one of the ways that "called attention" to what they were doing! Seeking the praise of men! (And the idea of "tooting their own horn"! ) Jesus basically said it works best if done "in secret"! And that "your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you"!

Same idea with giving and fasting!

Well, what can we say about "the Lord's Prayer," which Jesus gave as a "model" of how we should pray? We can only do a "fly-over" (as Paul Logan called it) in this setting, since there's so much that could be said, or written, about each part of this great prayer!

Jesus addresses God as "Abba Father," reminding us of the "most intimate" relationship that one could have, as His "children"! "Who art in heaven" portrays His "transcendence and sovereignty" (suggests John Stott)! "Hallowed by Your name!" recognizes His infinite holiness and majesty! Dr. Constable says, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" are two closely-related petitions which "express a desire that the acknowledgment of His reign and the accomplishment of His purposes take place in the world, even as they already do in heaven"!

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the renowned Welsh minister, writes that the "sum of it all (speaking of the Lord's Prayer) is that there is nothing in the whole realm of Scripture which so plainly shows our entire dependence upon God as does this prayer--and especially the last three petitions"!

"Give us today our daily bread" acknowledges our ultimate dependence on God's care and generosity to meet all our needs!

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" sees us as debtors before God, because of our sin! John Stott has written: "Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offense against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling!"

And, finally, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (or the "evil one)! Whereas the previous petitions ask forgiveness for sins one has committed, this petition asks for strength not to commit future sins! (We should take these words to mean "not to succumb to temptation, since God "doesn't lead us into temptation"!)

Well, what about "fasting"? The Pharisees fasted--some "twice a week," as noted in Jesus' parable, in Luke 18:9-14--but all to no avail, from an eternal perspective! And yet the idea of a deliberate and purposeful setting aside of eating and the normal routine of life to spend time with God--meditating on His Word, being "broken," before Him, and seeking Him through prayer, in a quiet and private place--is something that is well-pleasing with God and recommended, as God leads, for every believer!

The last part of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6 deals primarily with "wealth and worry"--and there is a clear connection!

Jesus obviously knew the dangers for us of making the accumulation of material possessions the goal of one's life! Verse 19 says it best: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure, there your heart will be also!" And it's the later part of the verse that gets to the root of the problem! The thing that we "treasure" most highly inevitably occupies the center of our "heart"! (Loved the illustration Dan Crabtree gave us last nite about how his former boss responded to the total loss of his home in a fire--with the words that he had lost "nothing of value!")

Well, what about worry? Not a problem, right? Ha! Yet Jesus said clearly that we should not worry, particularly about the basic necessities of life, noting how God looks after the "birds of the air," and the lilies of the field and, even more so, over us!

The theologian Barclay writes: "You may think you have won this great battle against Satan because you conquered him when he came in at the front door and talked to you about laying up treasures on earth! But before you are aware of it, you find that he has come in through the back door and is causing you to have anxious thoughts about these things!" He added: "There may be greater sins than worry, but very certainly there is no more disabling sin!" Wow!

Well, Jesus ends this part of His sermon with the bottom-line challenge (vs. 33): "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you!"

There's an old song we used to sing when I was young! Many years ago! It goes: "Why worry when you can pray; trust Jesus, He'll show the way! And it continues! I sang it to our small group members last nite! Hope they'll all return!

And so, men, let's go with God and try to focus this week on "the things that really matter"!

Lowell