

Week 6

Matthew series: God revealed

Matthew 6 The new commandments: (Deeper with God: part two)

Matthew 5 is concerned with People. Jesus wants us to be invested in how we treat others. Jesus was extremely concerned about the teachings of God. The current religious rulers were leading the people down a dark path of pride, ritual, and misguided traditions. Matthew 6 is concerned about our relationship with God. In Genesis 4 we have the story of Adam and Eves first children Caine and Abel. Abel is the good son. He never speaks but is pleasing to God by his good offering. Caine on the other hand does speak and God does not accept his fruit of the ground offering. Have you ever had God reject your plan?

Matthew 6:1 **“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.”**

Genesis 4:6-7 **“Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”**

Caine brought for show. Caine wanted to be praised. Caine secretly had a prideful heart. I Samuel 16:7 says **“But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”** Jesus in Matthew 6 is challenging the people about the way they are taught to treat God. Jesus points out that the religious people were acting religious for show. The heart of their dedication and worship to God was not real. What do you think a fake Christian would look like?

Matthew 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.”**

Deuteronomy 23:5 **“However, the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you.”**

There has been a disconnect between the people and God. Religion has made a wall between God and the people. Yes, God was supposed to dwell in the most Holy place. Yes, only a priest could enter that place. Yet, Jesus has come saying the Kingdom is near. Jesus is not changing the game but deepening it. We now have access to the Father in Heaven. In many ways, this was blasphemy. Beyond that, the rulers felt threatened because they told everyone they were the way to God.

There are many things that were leading the people astray. It's the same for us today. Jesus mentions three big ones. The first is money and giving. It's easy to say I tithe. If I boast that I tithe, then that is altogether another thing. Jesus begins this chapter with a few common phrases. He says *your Father in heaven* and *the Father who sees in secret*. There are others too: *The Father knows* and *the Father will reward*. Jesus is being revolutionary here with this teaching. He is giving us direct access to God. It's something that has never been heard of before. Matthews theme throughout his Gospel is God is with us.

Read Matthew 6 for next week and think about how political people show their good deeds. Read Malachi 3 for extra reading. The message is the same in the Old and New Testament.

1. In Matthew 5:26 it says **"Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."** This is about settling debt. Yet, I feel that alms giving is the reversed. We are not commanded to but asked to give to others. If we come to God with a clean heart, then our offering is accepted. Jesus points out that treasure in heaven is being built by our hearts intentions. The flip side is telling of your good deeds to gain praise. If we treat praise as gold in our hearts, then that is what we will receive immediately. The trouble is the fuzzy feelings of praise pass in time. Giving done with the heart in secret builds wealth in heaven that will last forever. I believe that wealth is made of honest intentions.
Matthew 6:4 **"so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you"**
Proverbs 16:2 **Proverbs 16:2 "People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives."**

2. I could go on about prayer for ever. I love prayer. If nothing else, we are all able to pray. This section of the Bible is so controversial. People love to take a section and make it stone. If Jesus did it this way, then it's always done this way. I was preaching in a church that always wanted the benediction of the Lord said at the end. It's tradition. This example of prayer by Jesus has been adopted in many church circles the same way. They miss the point.

Jesus is not instructing us to pray only this way but rather, in this way. This prayer opens by acknowledging God. Secondly Jesus gives us an opportunity to thank God for what he provides. Thirdly, Jesus wants us to be humble and ask for forgiveness. Finally, we are to ask for protection from Satan. Do you notice two things missing in this prayer. One is asking for more than what sustains us. It's not that we can't ask, but that is not the intent of prayer. Jesus says

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God already knows what you need or want. For all intents and purposes, God just wants to talk. The second is us. We are asked to pray for the kingdom and give thanks.

One side note is this prayer ending. In the oldest manuscripts, this prayer ends with a call for protection. Found in some later manuscripts is the ending *for thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever, amen*. There is much debate over this ending. There are several other added pieces of scripture that appear to be written later. Some theories are that Monks added this to finish it properly. Others theologians omit it altogether. Whoever did write this extra ending does hold the flavor of Mathew's declaration that the kingdom and heaven is near. This prayer in Luke does not have the extra ending at all.

Matthew 6:15 "but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Exodus 23:21 ""Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him."

3. There are three other sections of this chapter that put it all together. Throughout these verses, we see Matthew using the words *rewards* and *giving*. Both of these comes from God. Matthew wraps up this chapter by tying your heart to your treasure. Rewards here on earth will be instant. Rewards in heaven will last forever. Your fasting, prayer, and giving will be judged. In our look at the Old testament I tried to point out that God will test by fire to refine us and redeem us. This also goes for our hearts. Will your heart stand the heat as it did for the three men in Daniel 3 in the blazing furnace? Jesus mentions that the eye is the lamp. How often do we see something bright or dark in a person's eye? A troubled person usually is struggling between the good and bad. Jesus is quick to add that we can only play in one ball park. We cannot serve two masters.

Matthew 6: "No one can serve two masters; for a slave, will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."

4. To some people, Matthew 6 is called the worry chapter. This is one of the most well used and famous set of verses in all the Bible. Jesus goes through the analogy of God clothing and providing for all the simple creations of this earth. We are more than most in creation. Humans are complicated beings. The make-up of a human is immeasurable. Jesus knows that and is making the argument that if God will take care of the simple, then how much more the complicated. In our study, we talked about the revelation of God. General revelation is everything God made. This is not a random thing. I think Matthew added this section last because it sums up this chapter. The religious leaders worried about tradition, perception, being holy, looking holy, and many more things. It must have been extremely tough to be a Pharisee. Worry is a killer of the soul. This whole chapter wants to free us from worry over money, food, image, and anything else that takes away our happy relationship with God in secret.

Matthew 6: "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

Psalm 23:4 **“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”**

What it all means?

I went from Jesus revealed back to God revealed. Why? I thought the Gospels were all about Jesus? I believe that if you paint God in the Old Testament only, then you're doing God a disservice. If you paint Jesus only in the New Testament, you are doing Jesus a disservice. I know a pastor who finds Jesus in the Old Testament words everywhere. I dislike that. Those writer's intent was to speak of God's word to those people in that day. They did not know Jesus. Those books by and large are history of God and his chosen people.

The New Testament is a different cat. Jesus is the New Testament. Yet, God the Father is the New Testament too. Jesus is claimed to be God. How did they know that? How do we know that? It's all in the actions and character of God. We see Jesus in the old books because God acts like Jesus did. It's the same in the new books. The character of God is displayed in Jesus and his disciples. More so in the writers like Paul and James.

What it means is that God promoted one God in the old books. The New Testament writers promote one God in the New books. It's the same message. The focus of a Christian should be the same in everything we do. When we worry, rely on God. When we pray, rely on God. If God is with us our eyes will shine like Moses shined when he visited God. When we do good praise God. When we receive gifts praise God. I sternly will say that prayer is about talking with God far more than asking for wishes. Praying and doing good is more than being good. It's about doing it for God and his people.

Matthew 6:33 **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”**

Psalm 47:7-8 **“For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with a skillful psalm. God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.”**