

Sermon on the Mount - Part 12

by David Servant

Jesus teaches that we must strive for moral and practical perfection, and that giving to the poor and other ministries is essential to demonstrating love for God and love for others.

Duration: 28:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:1

Topics: "Christian Living", "Righteousness"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of righteousness, emphasizing the call to practical perfection and living a life imitating God. It addresses the need for genuine motives in acts of righteousness, such as giving to the poor, praying, and fasting, highlighting the significance of doing these acts with sincerity and not for show. The sermon also challenges the traditional views on tithing and emphasizes the need for stewarding money wisely and giving to those in need with a pure heart.

Transcript

Welcome back to Israel, and I'm so glad you've joined me here on Mount Arbel in Galilee. We've been sitting here doing some filming for a couple hours, and the sun's getting a little bit higher in the sky, but the breeze is blowing, and it's just so absolutely lovely. So I'm glad you've joined me.

We're going to continue our study through the Sermon on the Mount, and we're just about to start now into a new chapter, chapter six. The Sermon on the Mount, of course, is Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Remember though that Jesus did not stop at this point in the sermon and say, okay, now let's take a break and let's come back in five minutes like we do on this broadcast. He just kept right on going.

So let's back up to Matthew 5, and verse 48, and then just kind of keep reading and go with the flow that was the original flow. Jesus said, therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. Well, that is a setting a standard of righteousness.

Now, people say sometimes that when Jesus said in Matthew 5, verse number 20, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. And I'm just quoting now from Matthew 5, 20 in the introduction of this sermon. They'll say, well, you know, Jesus is only talking there about imputed legal righteousness.

And we all get that when we accept Jesus as our savior. Well, I've already told you how wrong that assumption is because Jesus never mentions imputed or legal righteousness. He's talking all the time about practical righteousness.

And this verse in verse 48 that we're just reading, underscores that all the more. He's not talking about legal perfection now, is he? He's not talking about imputed perfection or hypothetical perfection or theoretical perfection. He's talking about moral, practical perfection, how you live your life.

And so the standard is set. He's raised the bar quite high now. Perfection, imitation of God himself.

As God is perfect, so we should also be perfect. You are to be perfect. Some also interpret this as a prophecy that, hey, you are going to be perfect one day.

Now, okay, I agree with that because I believe that the good work that God began in us, he's going to complete until the day of Christ Jesus, as Paul promised us in Philippians. But I don't think that's what Jesus is necessarily talking about here. He's not saying, okay, so forget everything I just said.

Just sit back. Don't worry about a thing because God one day is going to make you perfect. You are to be perfect.

If he's saying that, if that's really what he's saying, that you are to be perfect, he's saying it this way. You're going to be perfect one day, so you might as well start striving to get there right now. You're destined to be perfect.

That's your destiny. You will be perfect, and so that's why you ought to be on the path of perfection right now. He's not saying anything less than that.

He's certainly, again, not saying, kick back, don't worry about it because you'll be perfect one day. This scripture is full of admonitions to be holy, and beyond that, Jesus speaks of the necessity of holiness over and over again. The one key verse, of course, was Matthew 5 and verse 20, so we continue now.

Verse number one of chapter six, beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them. Now, notice Christ assumes that they are going to be righteous. Just saying now, now we're going to deal with your motive as to why you're righteous.

Of course, it's a given. You're my disciple. You've repented of your sins.

It's a given. You're going to be righteous, but now we want you to be pure in heart. You've got to be righteous for the right reasons, and a wrong reason to be righteous is the reason that the Pharisees have a little bit of righteousness, and that is to be seen by men.

You'll see in a moment. It's very clear, once again, he's exposing the example, the horrible example of the scribes and of the Pharisees. Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by men, to be noticed by them.

Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may be honored by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Now, Jesus didn't name any names there, but when he said that, everybody knew he was talking about because they had seen this very thing happen in their cities and in Jerusalem. Wealthy Pharisees and scribes going into the streets, blowing a trumpet, and then announcing, proclaiming, all the poor, come here. I'm going to give away some of my money.

Jesus, they're doing this just to be seen by men. It's not because they care about the poor. It's not because they love God with all their hearts.

It's because they want people to speak well of them. They're doing it openly, outwardly, because they want people to see them. He said, that's the example set before you by your spiritual leaders all your lives.

Well, I'm correcting that now. Don't follow their example. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

Give in secret, and then you will get rewarded for that. Not by men receiving their praise, you'll receive reward from God. I want to ask you two questions.

Are you doing that? First of all, I guess I should ask this. Are you giving to the poor? The Pharisees were, the scribes were, albeit for the wrong reasons, but they were at least doing it, yet many professing Christians never give anything to the poor. I'll tell you one reason why.

There's a couple of reasons. One is, because living here in Disney World, where most of us are living, and if you're watching this on a television set, you're probably living in Disney World. What do I mean by that? You're living in a wealthy country, and really probably not so much aware of how the rest of the world lives.

One third of the world lives on less than a dollar a day. That's one reason. We don't really have any truly poor people.

The truly poor people are out of sight in other places. We're living in Disney World, and the only poor people we see are all overweight, and they're not starving. That's one reason.

Here's a second reason, and I'm saying this very seriously, because many spiritual leaders in our day, all they're emphasizing is, give your tithes to the church, so we can keep on building our buildings. First of all, there's not one mention of anybody building a building in the New Testament for the glory of God. The early church met in homes, in small groups, where disciples could be made, one-on-one interpersonal discipleship, which Christ exemplified before his disciples, and then which he commanded them to do.

He said, go and make disciples. He didn't say gather people together once a week and give them a sermon. He said, go and make disciples.

That is, committed believers whom you teach on a regular basis, primarily by your example, and then also by your words and by your teaching. Go make disciples. You cannot make thousands of disciples by giving a sermon once a week.

It's absolutely impossible. The poor who live outside of Disneyland are often completely ignored by the church at large. I would say that is so true.

While billions and billions and billions of dollars are spent for our spiritual comfort, so we can sit on padded pews and air-conditioned sanctuaries in these huge edifices, people are starving. In many cases, it's our own brothers and sisters in Christ are starving and going without the most basic necessities in places

around this world. We call ourselves Christians.

Well, the Pharisees and the scribes, they were giving to the poor for the wrong motives. Does our righteousness exceed their righteousness? We don't give anything to the poor. There's no need for us to check our motives about why we're giving to the poor because we're not doing a thing for them.

There are ministries, of course, that are reaching out to the poor. One of them we have ourselves called Orphan's Tear. For \$20 a month, you can sponsor a Christian orphan in a developing country and provide food and clothing and school fees.

You just think that we'd have a hard time finding enough orphans because there'd be so many Christians who want to obey what Christ said here in giving alms to the poor that we'd run out of orphans and we'd have to be telling people, sorry, we don't have anymore. But no, we always have an inventory of children waiting to be sponsored just to find Christians who are living in Disney World who will part with \$20 a month. And we have another ministry called I Was Hungry.

We do similar things where we meet very pressing needs of believers around the world, those who are widows and handicapped believers in Christ who have no way to make a living or just make a very menial living, and we're meeting their most pressing and basic needs. Well, you can go to our websites and read all about it, Orphan's Tear. There it is on your screen, .org. I Was Hungry, .org. There it is on your screen.

You can go there and you can, in a practical way, obey the Lord Jesus Christ here and give to the poor. And do it secretly. Don't announce to your family, here's what I'm doing, look at all the orphans I'm supporting and so forth.

No, then your motives are wrong. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. And for those who are spiritual leaders, pastors, well, first of all, you should be setting the example.

You should be giving to the poor yourself. And you should, of course, be collecting money for the poor. If all you're doing is collecting money for your programs, your building programs, and your missionaries who are going out into the world and living like people in Disneyland amongst all those poor people, and that's all your money's going to, you're not doing anything to help widows and orphans, and you call yourself a Christian? And you call yourself a Christian pastor? Are you kidding me? Take some time and study widows and orphans in the Bible.

Study God's concern for the poor in the Bible. And then get with the program. Get with the program and start stewarding your money as God intended you to steward your money.

He gave you, not so you could keep it up for yourself, but so you could give. What do you think Jesus would have thought if as he broke the bread and distributed the bread and the fishes to his 12 disciples to feed the 5,000 that day, if as he was multiplying the loaves and the fishes, he looked up and he saw 12 big piles of loaves and fishes and all the 12 apostles standing there like this saying, well, look how God has blessed me, bless God. He would have become very angry.

God blessed them, God gave to them so that they could distribute it to those who had basic needs. If God has given you more than what you need, it's not so you can store it up on this earth, it's so you can store it up in heaven. That's where your heart should be.

We'll be reading about that in this Sermon on the Mount as we progress our way through, okay? All right. We'll come right back to this in just one moment after this short little side trip. See you in one minute.

Hey, welcome to ancient Ephesus in modern day Turkey. I'm standing here at the theater in Ephesus. This immense structure would seat about 24,000 people.

Well, you've probably read in Acts chapter 19 of the great revival that occurred here as a result of the many miracles that were taking place at the hands of the apostle Paul. So much so that it hurt the trade of the silversmiths. Idol sales were weighing down in Ephesus.

Eventually, you can read it in the book of Acts, there was a riot here in this theater. People shouting for two hours, great is Artemis of the Ephesians. And the disciples were afraid to let Paul enter into this theater to defend himself for fear that he'd be ripped in pieces.

Welcome back. Hey, let's continue our study in the Sermon on the Mount. What do you say? In Matthew chapter six.

Of course, Jesus is raising the bar and every time he raises the bar, he exposes how low the bar has fallen under the influence of the scribes and the Pharisees. And these next verses we're about to read are no different. In three cases here now, Jesus discusses our motives in giving to the poor, in praying and in fasting.

And so God is not just concerned about the outward form of these things, but the inward attitude of why we do these things. And as I said in a former segment, every Christian who has any means should be giving to the poor. That was a regular feature of New Testament life.

Read the book of Acts, read through the epistles, you'll see it. Unfortunately, it's been so neglected and I'm going to place most of the blame on our spiritual leaders today who are always telling people, give, give, give, give your tithes. God's going to bless you.

And most of that money goes to pay the salaries of the church staff and for the building program. In fact, they even pervert the word of God. And let's just call a spade a spade here.

They'll say, oh, the Bible says bring the whole tithe into the storehouse and the storehouse is the local church. Well, I'd like to sit down and discuss that with you sometime, how you could possibly equate and prove that the storehouse of which Malachi spoke in, which God spoke in Malachi chapter three, somehow became the local church. The storehouse of the old covenant was nothing more than where the tithes were stored until they could be utilized by the Levites.

And so how is it that the tithe belongs only to the local church? If the tithes on the old covenant went to the Levites, let's say, and again, portions of it went to the poor. There was a tithe every third year, a second tithe that went to the poor. But let's just stick with the Levitical tithe.

If it went to the Levites, who are the equivalent to the Levites under the new covenant, if we're going to make this analogy? Are only pastors those who are ministers of God under the new covenant? Absolutely not. There's apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. And so those are the ones who are called to devote their full time, for the most part, in most cases, to vocational ministry, just as did the Levites under the old covenant.

That being said, for a pastor to stand in front of his church and say, you shouldn't be giving your tithes anywhere else, your tithe belongs here, you're deceiving people, you're twisting the word of God, and you know it. And I'm just going to be that blunt about it. You're being greedy.

And that's why so many of you who are pastors, who are not called to be pastors, you're called to be evangelists, you're called to be teachers, you're called to be church planters and so forth, you're stuck in a pastorate because you can't get out because you've created a system where that's the only place you can receive people's tithes. Because people have been taught, brainwashed, that the tithe goes to the local church, and in order to get that tithe, you have to be a pastor. And so that's a huge problem in the church today.

We've got multitudes of evangelists, teachers, apostles, and prophets who are trying to be pastors. They're unsatisfied, they're unhappy, they're out of God's perfect will, and they're doing all kinds of other things outside the local churches to fulfill what's really in their hearts because that's the only place they can be paid in the local church. And so we all need to repent, don't we? And pastors, you need to start saying, you know what, you need to give where God tells you to give.

Of course we need money here at the local church, but there's other ministries. And maybe that might free you up to be released from a pastorate that has you in prison, in chains, because you're really called to be an evangelist. And people are getting tired of hearing your evangelistic sermons every single Sunday, and everybody knows you're an evangelist.

But the only reason you're a pastor is because that's the only place you can get paid. And you cannot make it as an evangelist. And maybe you're a prophet, or an apostle, or a teacher, and you're stuck in a church.

We all need to repent of this concept that the tithe belongs to the local church. In fact, we really need to repent of the whole concept that everything's okay as long as you're tithing. No, if you're tithing and you're still laying up treasures on this earth, you can still go to hell in the end.

That's exactly what the Pharisees did. They scrupulously tithed, but they all went to hell because they were lovers of money. And so we'll discuss this later on.

This is very, very serious. I wrote a whole book on the subject of stewardship called Through the Needle's Eye. I looked at everything that Christ had to say, and he had a lot to say about it.

It's very serious. It's being ignored by so many in the church. Christ talks about giving alms to the poor.

Sometimes pastors will say, yes, give your tithes. Yes, you don't need to give to missionaries. We give to the missionaries.

God set up a local church for that. Where is that in the Bible? It's nowhere to be found in the Bible. Nowhere to be found.

That's nonsense. Absolute, utter, unscriptural nonsense. You can't prove that from the Word of God.

You are usurping authority that God has given you. You're robbing the body of Christ of many other blessings. You're robbing the people.

As a matter of fact, when you greedily say the tithe only belongs here. And so the tithe belongs wherever God says the tithe belongs. And I'm saying, if you limit yourself to the tithe and God gives you more, then you can still go to hell.

Too much is given, much is required. And for many people, to tithe is not enough. You've got so much left over that there's no sacrifice whatsoever in your tithing.

And you could very well go to hell because you're laying out treasures upon this earth. Proving that your heart is on this earth. Proving that you love money.

You know, if you'd have asked any of the Pharisees, Do you love God, Mr. Pharisee? What would have been his response? The Pharisee would have said, well, of course I love God. I love God with all my heart. That's the most important commandment.

Yet, the scripture says the Pharisees were lovers of money. They were completely deceived about this. They thought they loved God, but really they loved money.

And they all thought they were going to heaven, but they all went to hell. I wonder how many people are like that today within the church. Same deception.

I tithe. I give a lot of money. My pastor is always patting me on the back.

He takes me out to dinner because I'm a rich person. And I give so much money to this church, that's how I got my place on the board. I have another question.

How come it's always the rich people who wind up on the boards of the churches? Why is that? You know, I'm telling you what. A lot of shady stuff that's going on. And we need to repent.

We need to repent. James said, if a man comes into your assembly, dressed in fine clothes and wearing a gold ring, and you put him in a special place, and you say to the poor man who comes in dressed in old clothes, you sit here in a footstool by my feet. Have you not become judges with evil motives? Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom and so on and so forth? You see, so James condemned showing partiality to the rich.

And a rich person, by James' definition, was he was wearing nice clothes and he had a gold ring. That's all it took to make you a rich person back in James' day. I would submit to you that the majority of people that come into our churches in Disney World, where we live, are rich by James' standards.

But we show partiality to the ultra-rich. And they become the board members. They start calling the shots in the church and so forth.

We show them special privileges, even special seating. We need to repent of that. We need to repent of that.

So all that, really, needs to be said over and over again because we're negligent of it. Now, the next thing Christ talked about was praying. And he said in Matthew 6 and verse 5, When you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners in order to be seen by men.

Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. Jesus was speaking about something that these disciples of his had seen all their lives. People praying publicly.

Solely for the reason that people would see them praying publicly and then they'd, you know, be praised by men. Well, you know, we just came not so many days from a public place of prayer here in Israel, in Jerusalem. And again, we can't know everyone's motives.

And I know that the Western Wall is a very sacred place for Jewish people to pray and so forth because it's the only thing that remains of the Second Temple. You know, the whole thing wasn't part of the temple but just part of the retaining wall for the temple. It's a sacred place.

But I wonder how many of those folks do any praying at all in secret. If all of our praying is... If the only time we pray is in public, then that's probably an indication that, you know, our motives are we want to be seen by men that we're praying. Okay, so Christ said to his disciples, when you pray... Now, he didn't say, of course, you should never pray in a group or publicly.

We find examples of that in the Book of Acts. But he said, when you pray, go into your inner room. When you have shut your door, pray to your father who is in secret.

And your father who sees in secret will repay you. Praise God. And so, again, it's our motives.

It's not just important to pray, but important to pray with the right motives. That, you know, it's an expression of our love for God and not an expression of our love for ourselves that we want people to see how much we pray. And then Christ continues.

Since he's on the subject of prayer, he takes a couple little side trips here. And he says, when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose they'll be heard for their many words. Therefore, you are not to be like them, for your father knows what you need before you ask him.

And so we need to recognize that we're praying... that we're praying to an intelligent God. You know, he's not learning anything when we pray. Even when you pour out your heart to him, he's not saying, oh, I didn't realize that's how you felt.

God knows our thoughts, and he knew our thoughts thousands of years ago before we were even born. See, so God is all-knowing. So when we pray, let's pray intelligently.

You know, I recognize that there is a place, of course, for fervent praying that sometimes gets loud. But some Christians have the conception that the only time you're really praying is when you're moaning and groaning and crying out in agony, you know, and yelling loud. You know, if I had a relationship with you like that, that the only time that you spoke to me, you know, I saw you in the morning, oh, David, oh, David, it's so good to see you.

How was your breakfast this morning? You know, I'd begin to think to myself, there's something wrong with our relationship that you think you have to relate to me like that. Can't sometimes we just have a normal conversation at a normal tone and talk, you know, kind of like one-to-one like that, okay? So God doesn't just hear you when you're screaming and crying. God hears you when you're talking softly and when you're whispering.

And there's no need to say the same thing over and over and over and over again as if God was hard of hearing or at least not paying attention. In fact, when we repeat our prayer, the same request, it certainly is an indication that we really don't have faith that God is doing anything about our first prayer. So, you know, okay, God, you told me that time, so I'm gonna hit you one more time.

Okay. Well, we'll talk about this more in our next program. Thanks so much for joining me in this broadcast.

Until next time, keep following Jesus with all your heart. God bless you. Hey, there's a whole lot more happening through the ministry of Heaven's Family than just this teaching broadcast.

Heaven's Family consists of three divisions, the first of which is Shepherd Serve. And through the ministry of Shepherd Serve, we are literally equipping thousands of hungry pastors around the world with vital biblical truth every single year. We do that in two ways.

First of all, by pastors' conferences. They're happening almost every single month somewhere in the world. And secondly, through the translation and publication and distribution of a 500-page equipping manual called The Disciple-Making Minister.

Pastors are just loving this book because it's full of information that helps equip them to be more fruitful for the Lord Jesus Christ. That, in a nutshell, is the ministry of Shepherd Serve. The second division of Heaven's Family is known as Orphan's Tier.

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The third and the final division of Heaven's Family is known as I Was Hungry, obviously taken from the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 25, where he warned about the future judgment of the sheep and of the goats. Through the ministry of I Was Hungry, we are meeting the very pressing needs of Christ followers around this world in very poor nations. We're helping widows, orphans, lepers, refugees, victims of disasters.

You can read all of our current projects at IWasHungry.org. You can make a real difference. If you'd like to get involved in all three of the divisions of Heaven's Family, you can invest in what is called the Heaven's Family Mutual Fund. It's a great idea.

You can read about it at all three of our websites. Thanks so much. God bless you.

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