

Sermon on the Mount - Part 13

by David Servant

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a holy life with the right motivation, praying in consistency with God's character, and seeking God's kingdom to come and his will to be done.

Duration: 28:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:5

Topics: "Genuine Motives", "Authentic Prayer"

Description

This sermon delves into the importance of genuine motives in our actions, emphasizing the need for sincerity in our righteousness and the severity of Jesus' warnings regarding hypocrisy and false motives. It explores the significance of prayer, highlighting the need for authenticity and consistency in our communication with God. The sermon also touches on contentment, trust in God for daily provision, and the connection between forgiveness and holiness in our relationship with God.

Transcript

Well, once again, it's a lovely day here in Israel, and welcome to Mount Arbel in Galilee. I'm watching once again the sunrise in the east over the Sea of Galilee, very close to the place where Jesus gave the original Sermon on the Mount. And we felt like this would be a very appropriate place for us to study the Sermon on the Mount, and we're making lots of progress.

Currently, we're in the sixth chapter. And so if you have your Bible, could you open it to Matthew chapter six? And we're going to back up a little bit from where we were in our last broadcast, simply because I want to look at verses one and two that sets the stage for this entire first part of chapter six in a little different light than what we looked at in our former broadcast. Read with me, if you would, Matthew chapter six, verses one and two.

Jesus said, beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them, otherwise you have, now listen closely to these next two words, no reward with your father who is in heaven. Now verse two, when therefore you give alms, that would be giving money to the poor, 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, now listen closely, they have their reward in full.

All right, now why am I emphasizing those few words in those couple of verses? Well, because I think that sometimes Christians have read this and they've missed the seriousness, even the severity of what Christ

is saying here. It's often read in a different way. In our minds, we don't read, otherwise you have no reward with your father who is in heaven, we read it, otherwise you'll have less reward with your father who is in heaven.

But you see, Jesus has already been warning his disciples who gathered on a mountain nearby here that day of what they must do to stay out of hell and what they must do to gain heaven. We already read in Matthew chapter five and verse number 20, that very pivotal verse where he said, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. So you've got to do better than the scribes and Pharisees.

So that was one very sobering warning. And of course, right from the beginning of the sermon, we study them in some detail, the beatitudes. Jesus tells us who are the blessed, and by implication, who are not the blessed, who will inherit the kingdom of heaven, and by implication, of course, who then will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

So if you don't fit the characteristics of the blessed, if you can't identify with them, you're not blessed, and therefore yours is not the kingdom of heaven, yours is hell. Jesus has already quite soberly and severely warned his disciples that lust is a form of adultery that puts us in danger of going to hell. He says the same thing about being angry with our brother and speaking venomous words of hatred towards our brother.

Hating a brother can put us in danger of hell. Jesus said that in verse 22, whoever shall say you fool shall be guilty enough to go into the hell of fire. And so I'm saying all that to try to set the stage for what we just read in Matthew chapter six.

If our motivation for living a holy life is purely to be seen by men, as were the motives of the hypocrites whom Jesus spoke of in Matthew chapter six and verse number two, well then that puts us out of a position to inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus said if that's your motivation, you're like the hypocrites, they have their reward in full. That is their total reward they're going to get for their goodness is the praise of men.

And if we do it just like they do, then he says you have no reward. Not less reward, no reward. Well that sounds to me like something we ought to take very, very seriously and you can understand.

He's talking about your whole motivation for why you're doing what you're doing. If your heart's not right, then you're not right. And if you're not right, you're not worthy to enter into God's kingdom.

If you're not doing good things, the good things that you do and living a holy life to please God because you're concerned what he thinks and you want to hear his praise, well then you see you haven't even got to square number one yet because the foremost commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart. That should be motivating what we do. All right, so I'd just like you to consider that because it fits that interpretation of these two verses.

It's not too strict. It fits in quite well with everything else that Jesus has said so far. This sermon, a theme that has been recurring is how you can be certain you're going to heaven and what characterizes those who are heaven bound and what characterizes those who are hell bound.

Hell bound people are hypocrites and these folks would give alms. They'd give to the poor but they'd blow trumpets ostensibly to gather the poor but in reality just to get the honor of people who would see them distributing some of their money to the poor. So Jesus tells us, do these good things in secret and

therefore your father will reward you openly.

Okay, from there then Jesus talked about our motives in praying and the same thing. Don't do it to be seen by other people. Do it secretly so that God knows that your heart is right before him.

You're doing it because you love him and since he's on the subject of prayer, he's going to take a little side journey because he's going to come right back to this theme of our motives for why do we do what we do and talk about fasting under that same subject. But he talks about prayer and he says in verse number seven, here's where we left off last time. When you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do for they suppose that they'll be heard for their many words.

Therefore do not be like them for your father, now listen, knows what you need before you ask him. This is so important. I think probably most Christians know this verse and so those that have had a real experience with the Lord Jesus Christ are not holding prayer beads and repeating the same prayer over and over and over again.

Yes, I know there are many within Christendom who have that practice, but that's a pretty good indication that they don't know God and if they do know him, they don't know him very well in light of what he said right here. There's no need to be just senselessly repeating the same prayer thinking that if I just say this prayer 10 times, God will answer my prayer. We have a local newspaper where I live and sometimes people of a certain denomination put little advertisements into the want ad section and they say, say this prayer 20 times and whatever you want, your prayer will be answered.

That's pure paganism, but yet these folks go to church every Sunday and don't know any better than that. All right, well, I think we could elaborate on this because the reason that Jesus said don't use meaningless repetition is because God already knows what you need before you ask him. He didn't say don't ask, he just said God already knows, so therefore there's no need to keep on saying things to try to inform him of what he supposedly doesn't know.

I think we could elaborate on this to say let's make sure our prayers are always consistent with what we know about God. In other words, let's not insult him with our prayers in something we know about his character. I'll give you one example that I think is very commonplace.

Again, in many evangelical circles, they're not just following a set liturgy and so there is a little bit of spontaneity in the prayers, but still we have a liturgy in a sense of singing hymns and choruses and so forth and we're reading, reciting someone else's words. We often recite words that are not true expressions of our hearts, in fact, they are false expressions of our hearts. Let me give you an example.

We sing the song, I Surrender All, but have we really surrendered all? I surrender all, but I've got a golf match in a half hour, so I hope the sermon is over pretty soon. I surrender all? Who are you fooling? You're not fooling God. The late great revivalist, Leonard Ravenhill once said, he said, Christians don't tell lies, they just come to church and sing them.

I think that's true of a lot of our songs. It's not only a lie, but it's insulting to God because he knows everything. He knows what's in our hearts.

He knows if we've surrendered all and yet we're singing to him, I surrender all. You see, and so that's praying or praising God or whatever we want to call it, in such a way that it's insulting to God. We sing choruses quite frequently.

We say, I kneel before you, I bow before you, yet you look around and everybody's standing. Well, everybody's lying. I mean, lying in the sense they're telling a lie.

I mean, instead of they're lying down, they're lying, you know. And so I find myself, my conscience bothers me. When I am in a church service, when we sing songs like that, if I sing, I kneel before you, well then either I don't sing it or I get down on my knees.

It's sad, you know. I think there ought to be more kneeling amongst those of us who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ. You know, Jesus himself knelt before his father in reverence and adoration before him.

So if it's appropriate for Jesus, it seems like it ought to be appropriate for the rest of us who are the brothers and sisters of Jesus, don't you think? Okay, so I'm just giving you one example. I suppose we could cite other ones. The point is, pray in such a way that it's consistent with what we know about God.

I mentioned to you in the last broadcast, you know, some people have the idea that God only hears your prayers when you're yelling them. That's a little bit of an insult to God because God knew what you were going to pray even before it came out of your mouth, even before you knew what you were going to pray. And he's not hard of hearing.

He can hear even our whispered prayers, okay? So without elaborating further, as you pray, just ask yourself the question, is this consistent with the character of God? One place that you're safe to go if you want to pray accurately is to go to the Psalms themselves or other prayers in the Bible and pray those. And again, they are someone else's words, but they were like, for example, many of the Psalms are David's Psalms. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit when he wrote those Psalms and when he prayed them.

And certainly they were prayed in consistency with the truth about the Lord, about God. And so you're safe in praying those prayers. In fact, we can learn a lot from praying those prayers.

A lot of people think that some of the prayers that David prayed were unscriptural prayers, but you know, if they were inspired by the Holy Spirit, that really can't be the case, can it? All right. Okay, so Jesus continues on the subject of prayer and in our very next segment, we'll look in much more detail at what is commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer, but let's read it for now. We'll come back in a moment and discuss it.

He said, pray then in this way, our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. And so Jesus is focusing on what's most important first. Our greatest desire ought to be that God's name would be hallowed, revered, honored, and respected.

We'll talk about that more in just one minute. Hey, welcome to Laodicea, the seventh out of seven churches to whom John wrote in the book of Revelation. The Laodicean church had become lukewarm and Jesus said to them through John, I know your deeds that you are neither cold nor hot, but I would that you were cold or hot.

Therefore, I will spit you out of my mouth. Notice Jesus didn't say, I know your hearts. He said, I know your deeds because our deeds reveal what's in our hearts.

Why did they become lukewarm? Because you say I am rich and I've become wealthy and have need of nothing. You do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. The very things Jesus warned about, the deceitfulness of riches had come in and deceived the Laodicean Christians.

They thought everything was okay, but from God's perspective, it was not okay. We all need to beware of the deceitfulness of riches. Okay, welcome back.

Let's pick up where we left off before our break in Matthew chapter six and verse number eight, rather verse number nine, the beginning of what we call the Lord's Prayer. Jesus said, pray then in this way. Now there is some debate in Christian circles whether Jesus meant for us to pray this prayer just by repeating it or if we should simply use it as a pattern for prayer and derive the principles that we can out of it.

I think that both possibilities are good possibilities. Jesus here, according to Matthew, said pray then in this way, and so he isn't necessarily giving us a prayer that we should just simply repeat, but yet I think in another gospel, I forget if it's Mark or Luke, but that writer has Jesus saying pray this prayer. Either way, if you're going to pray it verbatim, then I think we need to pray it slowly and think about what we're saying because it can very easily become meaningless repetition just as Jesus warned against in the verses right before this.

The principles in this prayer are so powerful. If we will really honestly look at what Jesus said here, really this prayer is revolutionary in a lot of ways. I find myself praying it at times verbatim, but I want to think about what I'm saying and I want to make sure that my heart is in it, that I'm not just reciting words.

I see that is often the case when Christians pray this prayer, but sometimes I use it as a pattern for prayer. The important thing is what ought to be foremost in our hearts and minds as we go to the Lord in prayer is this first request. Our Father who art in heaven, well that identifies who we're speaking to and he's no longer just God, but he's also our Father who is in heaven.

May your name or hallowed be your name. What does it mean to hallow God's name? It means to revere, to honor and to respect his name, which of course would mean to do what he says, to live your life in such a way that is honoring to him. We honor his name every time we obey his commandments.

This first part of the prayer ought to cause us to look at our lives and examine ourselves and say, hey, am I even worthy to pray this prayer because here I am praying that God's name, everyone would hallow his name, that everyone would be reverent towards him and respect him and revere him and fear him and so forth and love him and serve him. What right do I have to pray that prayer if I'm not honoring and respecting and revering and hallowing God's name? I don't really have any right at all, do I? Or more specifically, I could ask this question. How can I pray on Sunday morning in church? Oh God, may your name be hallowed when the night before I rented a video of a movie and I entertained myself using God's money with watching actors blaspheme God's name and use his name as a swear word.

How can I pray on Sunday morning? God, may your name be hallowed. Now last night, of course, I was paying good money to watch people use your name as a swear word, but I pray that your name would be hallowed. We're not fooling God.

We're only fooling ourselves. This is a prayer that, once again, is a prayer about holiness, and that's a recurring theme in this entire sermon. How does God want his disciples to live? Even in our prayers, it

ought to reflect our heart's desire to do God's will and for everyone else to do God's will.

Then, of course, the second and the third requests are very, very similar. In verse number 10, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That means we want God's will to be done perfectly on the earth.

Praise God. How could we possibly pray that prayer without thinking about, well, how's my life doing in this regard? Am I perfectly obeying God? Is his will being done perfectly in my life, or are there still areas that need submission? Are there still parts of my heart that I need to give up completely to God? Are there still things that I need to do? Amen. So it's amazing how many times this prayer is prayed, and people pray it without even thinking about those things.

But a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ, how can he not think about those things? They call this the Lord's Prayer. I think we really ought to call this the true disciple's prayer, because only they have a right to pray it. If you're not born again, and if you've never repented of your sins and become a follower of Christ from your heart, for you to pray this prayer is almost like it's an abomination to God, because you are so out of sync with everything that this prayer represents.

You think of how this prayer is prayed by so many folks every week around the world in church services who have no real relationship with Jesus Christ. Now, after we have prayed for what is most important in a general way, that is, it's a cry for God's kingdom to come, his will to be done. Maybe I should also mention, when we're praying, thy kingdom come, of course, God's kingdom is already within us, because the king has sent his Holy Spirit within us.

We're already submitted to the king, but can you see, a kingdom requires a king. If you have a king, that implies someone to submit to, someone to obey. We have so many folks today who are teaching and who supposedly, they say they believe, I suppose they believe it, that we're saved simply by praying to accept Jesus as our savior.

Where is that? In the Bible. It's not in the Bible. When the Philippian jailer asked Paul, what must I do to be saved, Paul didn't say accept Jesus as your savior.

He said, believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and you'll be saved. You see, we're saved by believing in a person. Who is that person? That person is Jesus, and that person is also Lord.

He's king. He's master. If you believe in him, you're going to begin to want to serve and obey him.

You're going to submit to him. A friend of mine actually studied how many times Jesus is mentioned as savior in the New Testament, and I think it was something right around 15 times. Yeah, so yeah, Jesus is our savior.

He came to save us from our sins, but then he counted how many times Jesus is mentioned as being Lord, and it's around 700 times. You can see what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing to us about who Jesus is. More than anything else, he is Lord.

If you believe in him, then he becomes your king, and you want him to become everyone's king. If he's not your king, then you're not in the kingdom. Doesn't that just make perfect logical sense? If he's not your king, you're not in his kingdom, and you're not going to be in his future kingdom either.

After all that is prayed, verse 11, give us this day our daily bread. So we're asking now in a very humble way for our most basic need to be met. Paul said, if we have food and if we have covering, with these we shall be content, and that's a spiritual virtue that I think has been lost among us in the modern day church, in the western world at least, is such a lack of contentment because our culture, and many other cultures like ours, are so materialistic.

Life is all about getting more stuff. The more you get, supposedly the happier and more fulfilled you'll be, and we're bombarded with advertisements every single day that are telling us you can just be happy and fulfilled like these happy people in this commercial who are smiling because look what they have. You can have it too for payments of only \$379 a month or whatever, and yet this is a prayer of contentment.

Lord, I'm not asking to get rich. I'm not asking for a bigger house and a nicer car and more clothing. I'm not desiring to lay up my treasures on this earth, something that Jesus forbade all of his disciples to do, and we'll read that in this sermon.

No, I'm content with very little, and if you give me more than I need, that gives me the blessed opportunity to share, so just give me this day my daily bread. In fact, I'm trusting you. I know I can trust you so much I don't even have to ask for tomorrow's bread.

I don't have to ask for money in the bank. I can look to you day by day and you're going to supply what I need. Wow, what is implied in that prayer? We hear a lot of teaching about faith these days, and it seems that the people that are teaching us about faith are showing us how much faith they have by how much stuff they have.

Well, I say, if you really have faith, get rid of all your stuff and show us what real faith is. Live day to day and don't have anything except what you need for today, and trust God to bring you what you need tomorrow, and we'll see how much faith you really have. No, when you pile up stuff, what you show us is not how much faith you have.

You show us how little faith you have, because you don't and you can't trust God to meet your needs, so you're piling it up. Plus, you don't even have basic faith in the Lord Jesus, because he commanded you, don't lay up treasures on this earth, yet you're piling them up and then bragging about it. On top of that, showing us how your faith works.

Man, you've come a long, long way from what the Lord Jesus exemplified and what he taught. Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have. The writer of Hebrews said in chapter 13, this is in your Bible, this is in my Bible, why are so few practicing it? Jesus told all of his disciples, sell your possessions, give to charity, make for yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven.

For where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be also. All of that is connected to what we're reading here in this prayer, give us this day our daily bread. When you think about how many prayer requests are for more stuff, oh Lord, I want that, I want that promotion.

We submit prayer requests in church, I want that promotion, it's a better job, better pay, better benefits and so forth. Why do you want better pay and more benefits? Is it so that you can be a bigger blessing? So that you can share more, clothe more naked people and feed more hungry people or is it so that you can go deeper into debt and afford a bigger mortgage payment? No, this prayer request is a humble request of

trust in God for my basic necessities with which I will be content. And then another prayer that relates to holiness, forgive us our debts or forgive us our sins as we have forgiven our debtors.

Again, the theme of this prayer is holiness, isn't it? Once again, and here's an expression of holiness, Lord, when I sin, I need forgiveness and so I'm asking you for forgiveness. It's all contingent upon if I've forgiven others. Well, unfortunately we're out of time for this program, but we'll pick up right here in the next program.

Thanks so much for joining me. Until next time, keep following Jesus with all your heart. God bless you.

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