

Chapters 6 and 7 continue Sermon on the Mount and in our passage today Jesus focuses on our motives for doing good. Do we do things like charitable giving and praying so that we may have glory from men or do we do them because we love God? When we do good with the right motives the reward from God will far outweigh any reward we might derive from the glory that comes from men.

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<sup>1</sup> Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

**“Take heed that ye do not your alms [mercy; pity] before men, to be seen of them”** – The Greek word for “alms” refers to helping the poor because you wish to show them mercy or pity. However, Jesus warns us not to do so in order that other people can see what you are doing because He knows how our sinful hearts work. He knows that what other people think of us can be a strong influence on our behavior. But if we help the poor in secret, it eliminates the possibility that our motivation is the reward of being praised by other people for our generosity.

**“otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven”** – If we give to the poor so that we will be praised then we are doing it for the wrong reason and the Father will not bless us. He knows that we are selfishly doing it for our own benefit and that pleasing Him is not our priority.

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<sup>2</sup> Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

**“Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee”** – It’s not clear if Jesus is speaking of a literal blowing of trumpets or a figurative one, although there is some historical evidence of a custom of drawing attention to oneself when doing charitable deeds. Regardless, Jesus is telling us that when we do good we should not draw attention to ourselves in order that we may get the praise of men.

**“as the hypocrites [actor; pretender] do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men”** – The Greek word for “hypocrites” refers to the actors in Greek theater who would wear a mask when they played a character. Jesus is saying that those who draw attention to themselves when doing good are merely playacting behind a mask and not exhibiting their true character. They are not truly generous but are playing a fictitious character because their true motivation is to gain the glory of men.

**“Verily I say unto you, They have their reward”** – They shall have the reward that they seek: the fickle and fleeting approval of men. However, they will not receive a reward from God because He does not bless such hypocritical acts.

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<sup>3</sup> But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: <sup>4</sup> That *thine* alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

**“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth”** – Jesus uses a common expression of the time to stress the secrecy we should use when giving to others. In order to not draw attention to what we are doing, we should give in such a way that (if it were possible) that not even our left hand would be aware of what our right hand (the dominant hand that is doing the giving) is doing. Such secrecy would insure that our motive is sincere and that we are truly only doing it for the benefit of the receiver of the gift and to please God.

**“That *thine* alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly”** – When we give to the poor in secret then the only One Who knows what we’ve done is our Heavenly Father. He will be pleased and will bless you in a way that others will be able to see. They did not see the giving you did but they will see the blessings of God on your life. How much better it is to please God than to please men!

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<sup>5</sup> And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

**“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*”** – Jesus now moves to the subject of prayer, warning us not to do as the hypocrites (play-actors) do who are not praying with sincere motives.

**“for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men”** – These hypocrites love to pray publicly, whether in “church” or on street corners, and make a big show of praying where they can be seen. They want people to see how “holy” they are but it’s all just an act. Their priority is not to draw close to God but to impress people.

**“Verily I say unto you, They have their reward”** – God sees behind the mask that the hypocrites wear and allows them to reap the reward that they seek: glory from men. However, He will not hear nor reward them for their fake prayers.

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<sup>6</sup> But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

**“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet”** – The idea seem to be to find a private place to pray so that you are not impressing anyone but God. Jesus would often go into the mountains or the wilderness to pray, so a literal closet is obviously not intended. Jesus is also not forbidding public prayer because He also prayed publicly many times. What He is forbidding is the seeking of glory from men when praying.

**“and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret”** – When you are alone with God then you may pray and pour out your heart to Him. It is times of intimacy with the Father alone with no one else around that brings the most benefit.

**“and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly”** – When our Father sees that our priority is connecting with Him in prayer rather than seeking glory from men then He will reward us with blessings that others can see.

<sup>7</sup> But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. <sup>8</sup> Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

**“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do”** – We are not to repeat or chant the same words repeatedly as the prophets of Baal did on Mt. Carmel when challenged by Elijah: **1 Kings 18:26** *“And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.”* Even in some churches they recite the “Lord’s Prayer” (vs. 9-13) as a ritual because they have missed the point of why Jesus gave it. The prayers that God hears are those that come from the heart. **“for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking”** – God is not hard of hearing nor do we have to bug Him to convince Him to listen to us. Elijah made fun of the prophets of Baal when their god was not answering them, saying they should call out louder because Baal might be busy, away on a trip or asleep.

**“Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him”** – In the belief systems of the heathen they typically have to convince and sometimes bribe their gods to answer their prayers. However, our God is not like that and we do not approach Him the way the heathen approach their gods. Our God already knows our needs and He wants to meet those needs according to His will. **Matthew 7:7-11** *“<sup>7</sup> Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: <sup>8</sup> For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. <sup>9</sup> Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup> If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”* **Heb. 4:16** *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”* Isa. 65.24 also describes God’s attitude toward His people during the Millennial Kingdom.

<sup>9</sup> After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. <sup>10</sup> Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

**“After this manner therefore pray ye”** – Jesus is not giving us a prayer that should be recited but a pattern that should be used to guide our own prayers. Every prayer does not have to have every element given here but our prayer life should regularly use all of the elements Jesus lists for us. We do not have time or space to examine each one in detail but here are the high points:

**“Our Father which art in heaven”** – Recognize that God is our Father and, as any good Father, He loves us and watches over us.

**“Hallowed [pure; holy] be thy name”** – God’s name is holy and we should always show reverence to Him and give Him glory and praise.

**“Thy kingdom come”** – We are to pray for the day that Christ returns and the kingdom of God is established on this earth, putting an end to the sin and rebellion of mankind.

**“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”** – God’s will is done perfectly in heaven and our heart’s desire should be that God’s will is to be done on this earth in the same way, both in our own lives as well as throughout the rest of the world.

**“Give us this day our daily bread”** – We are to look to God as our provider in all things. We might think we provide for ourselves by working a job but it is God Who gives us the ability to earn a living. Everything we have ultimately comes from Him.

**“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”** – We should ask God to forgive us for the sins we have committed against Him and we should also forgive those who have sinned against us.

**“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”** – We need God’s help in avoiding the temptations to sin that the world and Satan constantly throw in our way. We should pray that God will help us remain faithful to Him.

**“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever”** – Recognize and worship God for being the final authority in all things because the kingdom belongs to Him eternally, as well as all power and glory.

<sup>14</sup> For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup> But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Jesus expands on one of the elements in the model prayer – “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Forgiveness restores fellowship between the sinner and the one sinned against. If we do not forgive those who have sinned against us then the Father will not restore the fellowship between us and Him when we ask Him for forgiveness.

<sup>16</sup> Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Jesus moves on to the subject of fasting and warns us not to broadcast the fact that we are fasting to others. The hypocrites (play-actors) exaggerate the situation so that it is obvious to others that they are fasting in order to appear super-spiritual to others. However, like with alms-giving and prayer, the only reward they will get is the temporary glory of men.

<sup>17</sup> But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; <sup>18</sup> That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

The way to fast that pleases God is to hide the fact that you are fasting so that only God knows about it. God blesses fasting that is done with the correct motive and not to impress men. As with alms-giving and prayer, God will bless the correct motive in a way that will become apparent to others.