

# *Truth for Today*

## **The Bible Explained**

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## **Our Attitude**

### **Matthew's Gospel ch.6**

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

#### **Introduction**

Today, I'll consider what the Lord Jesus said the Christian believer's attitude should be from Matthew ch.6, under the following headings:

1. vv.1-4. Our attitude concerning charitable giving or donations.
2. vv.5-14. Our attitude when praying.
3. vv.16-18. Our attitude concerning fasting.
4. vv.19-24. Our attitude towards money and material possessions.
5. vv.25-34. Our attitude concerning anxieties.

I'll read each portion of Scripture as we get to them from the English Standard Version. But first, some general comments about this middle section of the Sermon on the Mount. In His teaching in ch.5, the Lord used the formula, "You have heard that it was said to those [Israelites] of old. ...But I say to you." That was to make His disciples understand that it exceeded the Law of Moses. He gave the reason for this at the end of ch.5, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (v.48). Through Him, the Son, their new relationship was now as children of their Father, a relationship based upon the obedience of love rather than compliance to a set of rules. Ch.6 is about how they were to please their Father in their practical lives as sons of the kingdom (13:38) and so be rewarded, according to the repeated formula, "And your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (6:4, 6, 18). That would distinguish them from their fellow-Jews, who liked to be publicly seen and applauded for their outward show of religion as the Lord's words: "That they may be praised by others" (v.2) and "That they may be seen by others" (vv.5, 16), indicate. The Jews of the Lord's lifetime had become experts in showy hypocritical religion (vv.2, 5, 16), that is, they were play-acting rather than truly practising their God-given laws. That's why they are so strongly denounced by Christ in ch.23 (vv.13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; also 15:7 & 22:18). Their gratification was that they were able to congratulate each other, as the Lord said, "Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward" (vv.2, 5, 16). The Lord taught His disciples to have a different attitude. His instructions were direct and to the point:

- "Beware of" (v.1).
- "You must not be like the hypocrites" (v.5), but mainly,
- "Do not" (vv.7, 8, 16, 19, 25 & 26).

Now, whilst I readily admit that the Lord's teaching in ch.6 will be especially applicable to the future Jewish remnant during the Tribulation, I must stress that we present-day believers are also members of God's kingdom. [Paul wrote to the Colossians that we should give:](#)

“Thanks to the Father, who has qualified [us] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (1:12-14).

During the Christian era, Jesus is Lord in the kingdom of God, as Colossians ch.3 makes abundantly clear (see vv.13, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24; also 1:3, 10; 2:6; 4:17). It's only in the future physical kingdom of God upon earth that Jesus will be King (see Revelation 11:15 with 19:15-16). Therefore, as we now move on to consider Matthew 6 in some detail, we must ask ourselves: “How much is there about our outward Christian lives that reflect the inward realities of those who belong to God's kingdom as described in the Sermon on the Mount, especially when they're compared to the godly attitudes described by the Lord in ch.6?”

## **1. Our attitude concerning charitable giving or donations, vv.1-4**

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Here in the UK, we live in a society where, what happened in the synagogues and in the streets of Israel during the Lord's lifetime, is prevalent both in the church and in the world. Daily, we're bombarded and confronted with the very issue the Lord warned His disciples to steer clear of in their charitable giving activities. The Lord wasn't saying that His disciples weren't to give of their substance. No, such practices are right for everyone, unbelievers as well as believers, in a world where there are so many people in desperate need. What He was driving at was that such moral righteousness is practised for one of two reasons: one, out of genuine compassion; or, two, out of the selfish motive of drawing attention to oneself, “Look at how charitable I am!” The latter is a worldly feature called the pride of life by the apostle John, which is not of the Father (1 John 2:16). It has only temporary value, as Jesus emphasised in Matthew 6:2, “Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.” But the former, which Jesus called “giving...in secret”, arises for the believer, from understanding the Father's will and doing it. That has eternal value: “Your Father who sees in secret will reward you“ (v.4, cp. 1 John 2:17). Our God is the Father of lights, who is the Source of every good and every perfect gift. He knows how to properly, that is righteously, assess our attitudes and the reasons, when we give to the needy. The Lord is our example of how to secretly give to those in need. The Gospel writers don't mention that the Master ever gave to the needy, except when John records what the apostles thought Jesus meant when He said to Judas at the Passover Supper, “What you are going to do, do quickly” (John 13:29). They thought that Jesus had intended a donation should be made to the poor. This indicates to me that the Lord habitually gave to the needy throughout His public ministry. But He did that in such a way that not even the apostles, other than Judas, knew about it. Earlier, in 12:8, the Lord said that the world will always have poor people, to whom to show charity. The challenge for us today, from Matthew 6:1-4, is do we care for them? Is our attitude generous such that one hand is unaware of what the other hand is doing; and are our practices secretive? Or have we forgotten the Lord's “beware” warning?

## **2. Our attitude when praying, vv.5-14**

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their

reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Last week’s speaker said that the Sermon on the Mount is the most famous of all that Jesus said. Well, I think it’s safe to say that in Christendom these verses are the most well-known part of that sermon. Personally, I can recite the Lord’s Prayer from the AV by rote because I did so at every school assembly when I was young. Unlike the religious Jews mentioned by the Lord, public praying in today’s society, unlike charitable giving, doesn’t bring any applause from the world. But we can readily apply the Lord’s instructions to our personal prayer-life and to our church prayer meetings.

First, believers are commanded by the Lord not to be hypocritical when praying. That is, we mustn’t just go through the motions, we need to be genuine. Personal prayer is between God and me in the secret place. I love the AV’s idea that it’s a closet. There’s no room for anyone else, nor for any other person to hear; and everything else must be shut out of our minds. With God, we must be honest because He searches our hearts (Jeremiah 17:10; Psalm 139:23). The Father rewards such prayers, but in secret.

Second, the Lord commanded that our prayers must be meaningfully brief and not full of empty words, not like the babbling worshippers, of Baal in 1Kings 18:26, and of Diana of Ephesus in Acts 19:34. This practice particularly applies to church prayer meetings, in which “too many words” primarily adversely affects others who are listening to the pray-or. However, God can never be wearied by genuine repetitious prayer from His people. But He doesn’t need us to explain everything to Him, because He already knows what is needed before we ask. In this respect our prayers can be far-reaching. [For example, I am writing this talk whilst our church summer camps are taking place. At our church prayer meeting this week, we have prayed specifically for the Lord’s blessing on our own camps and also for all other similar Gospel activities which are currently in progress, the majority of which are unknown to us, but God knows them all!](#)

Third, the Lord provided a prayer-template for His disciples to follow. He didn’t command that the so-called Lord’s Prayer should be prayed verbatim. As the AV translates it, He simply said, “After this manner...pray.” In other words, our prayers should cover/include the items He listed. First and foremost, God must be given the worship that is due to His holy and sacred name, Father. Glory, praise, honour, and blessing must be heaped upon Him because of who He is, what He has done for us in Christ, and for all of His blessings. Next, another priority in prayer must be for the establishment of Christ’s everlasting kingdom upon earth. We present-day believers pray for the Rapture, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20). But we know that our blessed hope (His second coming) really concerns the appearing of His glory as Son of Man (see Titus 2:13 & Matthew 25:31). At present, men’s hearts are failing them for fear because of this world’s doom prophets’ predictions. God’s word promises a blessed future for our planet, when the Creator himself will right all the wrongs of wars, climate change, etc., and introduce everlasting joy, peace, righteousness, plenty, by His righteous rule of all nations.

“Give us this day our daily bread” indicates our total dependence upon God’s provisions for our bodily needs. Perhaps, in the West, we’ve become too reliant on good infrastructure and trade routes for foodstuff that we’re less conscious that God is the Source of all things. Of recent times, I’ve become aware of the abundance of our provisions and the need to pray that such will continue to be granted to us. However, our Christian brethren in other lands lack many of these basic necessities and know what it means to pray for daily bread. And this part of the prayer template will be apposite for the persecuted Jewish remnant, who will refuse the mark of the Beast and thus be unable to buy supplies. Finally, our attitude when praying should be one of humility as we recognise our human tendency to sin, and that evil one (v.13, footnote) is always nearby to test us. That would lead us to confess our shortcomings and ask for forgiveness, so that we can show the Father’s forgiving nature to others.

### **3. Our attitude concerning fasting, vv.16-18**

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

The Lord added another way in which His disciples were to be different from the hypocritical religious Jews. Fasting is an extension of praying and involves refraining from eating and drinking for a specified period of time. In Acts, both Peter (10:10 & 11:5) and Paul (22:17) fell into trances when involved in long, intense prayer. Also, the church in Antioch fasted over the appointment of Saul and Barnabas to missionary service (Acts 13:1-4). But they did this to discover God’s will and not to show-off. So there’s a place for believers to adopt this kind of attitude, although nowadays it often includes other aspects of self-denial, both to find out, and then do, God’s will.

### **4. Our attitude towards money and material possessions, vv.19-24**

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

These commands of the Lord strike at a very prevalent attitude in our materialistic society, that is, the desire to get, to have, and get even more and more money and possessions. It’s another worldly feature identified by the apostle John, which is also not of the Father (1 John 2:16). John called it the lust of the eye (KJV) and that throws light on the Lord’s references to the eye in Matthew 6:22-23. The spiritually healthy disciple’s eye will be single and will see money and/or possessions for their present value, the God-given means by which to buy the basic necessities of life. God’s provision of things such as food, drink, clothes, and housing enable believers to set their focus on serving Him, without worldly influences or distractions. That’s the spiritual attitude of laying up treasures in heaven. Any believers, who may be inclined to think they can enjoy the best of both worlds, should remember their Master’s statements that no one can serve two masters. It’s either God or mammon (v.24, footnote: mammon is a Semitic word for money or possessions). If

we have been blessed with earthly treasures, then it's incumbent upon us to be faithful stewards (see 1 Corinthians 4:2).

## 5. Our attitude concerning anxieties, vv.25-34

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

This final section of Matthew 6 commences and finishes with the word, “therefore” (vv.1 & 34). This means all that the Lord said about our attitude towards money and material possessions, in vv.19-24, has a direct bearing upon the anxieties every one of us are likely to experience in life. At present in the UK, several factors are adversely impacting upon our standard of living: inflation, the devaluation of money (in real terms) in our pockets and in our savings, the cost of living, etc. In these verses, it's as though the Lord had anticipated our natural reaction would be, “But, Lord, You surely appreciate the hardships we're experiencing?” Severe hardships will certainly be felt by the future remnant of Israel as they struggle to live in the face of persecution. Notice how the Lord directly addresses our attitudes over these issues:

- V.1, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life.”
- V.27, “And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his [life span]?”
- V.28, “And why are you anxious about clothing?”
- V.31, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’”

Yes, we must learn not to be taken up with these worldly attitudes, that are dominant features of present-day society; and to have faith that our Father will provide all our daily needs for such a godly attitude brings contentment (cp. 1 Timothy 6:6-8).

How hypocritical it would be of us to pray to our Father in heaven, the Person of every resource, “Give us this day...” and then to be anxious about those very things! But it's so very easy to be guilty of such double mindedness (see James 1:7). The Lord correctly assesses the faith of any anxious saint, “O you of little faith!” He who feeds the birds (v.26) and clothes the plants (vv.28-30) knows exactly what we need. The remedy is for each one of us to give first priority to the kingdom of God and his righteousness, for the Lord has promised that all these things that we're anxious about will be granted to us. And the Master has already explained to us in chs.5 & 6 (and will continue to do so in ch.7) what the kingdom of God and his righteousness consist of for His subjects.

But what about the future? Apostasy certainly has set in here in the UK. There only seems to be a veneer of civilisation now and world peace is so fragile. Well, the words of a hymn come to mind:

“How good is the God we adore,  
Our faithful unchangeable Friend,  
Whose love is as great as His power,  
And knows neither measure nor end!

Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,  
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;  
We'll praise Him for all that is past,  
And trust Him for all that's to come.”

(J. Hart, 1712-68).

I finish with the Lord's final instruction in v.34, which is self-explanatory:

“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk, number T1283, on Matthew ch.6, entitled 'Our Attitude'.

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