

Matthew – The King And His Kingdom
The Great Adventure
Notes For Session 7 – Chapter 6: Personal Piety

In this Chapter, Jesus is talks to us about what is necessary to enable us to grow in that virtue He spoke of in Chapter 5.

In Matthew 6:1-18 we look at Piety

T1. Virtue that God calls us to in Matthew 5 is Piety - a deep devotion to Christ.

- A.** Three major forms of Piety – Almsgiving, Prayer and Fasting.
- B.** Christianity and Judaism both believe these three forms piety, as does Islam (3 of 5 Pillars of their Faith).
- C.** 1 John 2:15-17 – identifies the three major problems we struggle with in our lives:
“Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world. Yet the world and its enticement are passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever.”
 - 1) Lust of the flesh
 - 2) Lust of the eyes
 - 3) Pride of Life
- D.** People in the 1st Century practiced their faith to be seen rather than doing it for God.
 - 1) Jesus not condemning Almsgiving, Prayer or Fasting.
 - 2) However, the Proper motivation for prayer, fasting and almsgiving is the key.

T2. Teaching about Almsgiving. Verses 1-4:

"(But) take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites * do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven." RSV

- The word Piety is the same as word as Righteousness used in Matt 5:20)

- A.** Everything Jesus is teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is related to your relationship with the Father.
- B.** Personal piety should be a relationship between you and your Father in Heaven only. Similar to the modesty in the relationship between spouses, i.e., done in private.
- C.** Your reward will come from God.
 - 1) Three times in chapter 6, Jesus says He will reward us. See verses 4, 6, and 18.
 - 2) Jesus wants us to be so eager to love and so eager to please God that we will do everything we should do for His eyes alone.
 - 3) Not looking for public rewards. He is our audience of one.

- 4) That takes Piety that takes Devotion. It takes a Heart that says, I do not care if I do not get any reward from the world. I know where my reward comes from; I know that my Savior Lives.
- D. Similar to the modesty in the relationship between spouses, our Piety is for His eyes only.
- E. Piety is to match the outgoing spontaneous generosity of God. The best way to be sure is for nobody else to know.
- F. Almsgiving combats the Lust of the Eyes, i.e., something you must have which consumes your life (Got to have it).
 - 1) Form of Penance.
 - 2) Giving rather than receiving.
 - 3) See Article 1434 of the Catechism.

1434 The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, *fasting, prayer, and almsgiving*, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: effort at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins."

- 2) Almsgiving is done in secret.

T3. Teaching about Prayer Verses 5-8

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

- A. Prayer combats Pride of Life.
- B. Must not be like the hypocrites who pray in public; rather, pray in secret to your Father and your Father shall reward you. Do not pray with many words – your Father knows what you need before you ask him.
- C. Prayer is part of the four pillars of the Catechism: Creed, Sacraments and Liturgy, Life in Christ, and Prayer.
- D. What you are in private is what you really are.
- E. Do not put on a show.
 - 1) Hypocrite is nothing more than an actor.
 - 2) Acting like something, you are not.
- F. Prayer is required in order to be able to live the Beatitudes.
- G. Spend time in prayer regularly – think of creative ways to pray each and every day – Set your watch alarm to go off at 12 noon; 3 p.m. (Divine Mercy Hour). I need to spend some time with God today.
- H. Private prayer is a compliment to public prayer; not a rejection of it.

- Jesus is inviting His followers to follow Him inside and outside. He wants our interior life to match our exterior life. That is called integrity – to be people of integrity.

T4. The Lord's Prayer. 6:9-13

"This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one."

Articles 2765 and 2781 of the Catechism:

2765 The traditional expression "the Lord's Prayer" - *oratio Dominica* - means that the prayer to our Father is taught and given to us by the Lord Jesus. The prayer that comes to us from Jesus is truly unique: it is "of the Lord." On the one hand, in the words of this prayer the only Son gives us the words the Father gave him: he is the master of our prayer. On the other, as Word incarnate, he knows in his human heart the needs of his human brothers and sisters and reveals them to us: he is the model of our prayer.

2781 When we pray to the Father, we are *in communion with him* and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Then we know and recognize him with an ever new sense of wonder. The first phrase of the Our Father is a blessing of adoration before it is a supplication. For it is the glory of God that we should recognize him as "Father," the true God. We give him thanks for having revealed his name to us, for the gift of believing in it, and for the indwelling of his Presence in us.

A. The Lord's Prayer gives us the framework for prayer.

- 1) St Augustine- the prayer is so perfect that it sums up in a few words everything that we need to ask God for.
- 2) The first half is directed to God,
Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven.
- 3) The second half is directed to our needs.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.
- 4) Daily bread both in terms of wheat and in terms of the Eucharist
St. Ambrose – "If the bread is daily, why do you take it only once a year? Receive daily what is of benefit to you daily. Live so that you may deserve to receive it daily."
- 5) Lead us not into temptation – God wants us to Draw near to Him, Trust him; Distrust ourselves
- 6) Everything is set within our calling God, Father in this Prayer. The Prayer could be called – What it means to call God Father.

B. Jesus is God's Son by nature, we by the grace of divine adoption. We are all adopted by God, so we call Him Our Father. We do not pray My Father, but Our Father - We are a family.

- 1) We partake of the divine nature of God. 2 Peter 1:4 – We are sons and daughters of God so we call him our Father.
- 2) Should not have a fear about approaching God as our Father.
- 3) God makes no arbitrary decisions: **CCC 271** God's almighty power is in no way arbitrary: "In God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are all identical.

Nothing therefore can be in God's power which could not be in his just will or his wise intellect."

T5. Verses Matt 6:14-15: (after the Lord's Prayer)

"If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions."

- A. A Heart that is not open to forgive others, will not be open to accept God's forgiveness. It will remain closed when God offers His forgiveness.
- B. We must forgive other people; we must be people of mercy.
- C. If we do not it will be hard for us to believe in God's forgiveness for us.

T6. CCC 2783 Thus the Lord's Prayer *reveals us to ourselves* at the same time that it reveals the Father to us.

- A. Reveals your own heart to yourself.
- B. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. – Am I worshiping God? Am I praising in on a daily basis?
- C. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven as it is on earth– Am I really concerned with His Kingdom?
- D. Give us this day our daily bread – Am I really depending on him?
- E. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others – Am I really forgiving other people?
- F. Are you conforming your life to this framework of the Lord's Prayer? This is your Father's idea.
- G. Pride of Life- St Thomas describes this as disordered self-trust.
 - 1) Pride – I can do this but you can't.
 - 2) Combat it through prayer.
 - 3) Prayer – I am dependent upon you Lord, I need to come to you.

T7. Teaching about Fasting: Verses 16-18

"When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."

- A. In Matt 9:14-15 Jesus will say they are not fasting because the bridegroom is with them. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."
- B. Now what Jesus is saying about Fasting (in laymen's terms): Keep yourself looking good, put a smile on your face, do what you can do, you do not have to put on a show.
 - 1) Fasting is between you and your Father.
 - 2) Fasting is denying ourselves so that we can position our hearts to hear Him and focus on those things that are more important than the good things that we are giving up.
 - 3) Give up things that you enjoy – not those things that you already do not enjoy.
 - 4) Fasting combats the Lust of the Flesh

T8. Treasure in Heaven Verses 19-21

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be."

A. Laying up Treasures – For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.

- 1) Earthly treasures do not last.
- 2) Hearts yearn for treasures, which will give us security and happiness.
- 3) Be happy and truly secure when we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.
- 4) One way to lay up treasures is by doing acts of piety knowing there will be a reward later.
- 5) Eternal life is bigger than our lifespan here on earth.
- 6) We are called to live beyond this life.

T9. The Light of the Body Verses 22-23:

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness. And if the light in you is darkness, how great will the darkness be."

A. Hebrew 1st Century Idioms:

- 1) To have a sound or a single eye. Idiom for generous person
- 2) To have a evil eye ; Idiom for Stingy person

T10. God and Money Verse 24

"No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

A. Article 2113 in the Catechism - Idolatry divinizes what is not God.

2113 Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon." Many martyrs died for not adoring "the Beast" refusing even to simulate such worship. Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is therefore incompatible with communion with God.

- 1) Are we serving and treating money and success as if it was God, because it will give us security/
- 2) Only one who will give us security – it is God.

T11. Dependence on God Verses 25-34:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat (or drink), or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they?"

Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?

So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. 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 given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil."

- A. Do not be anxious about your life. Do not worry about the things of this life.
- B. Your Father knows what you need.
- C. Seek first the Kingdom of God and then He will take care of us.
- D. Some people worry about everything. If they have nothing to worry about, they worry they have forgotten something.
- E. Do not worry about tomorrow.
- F. Worry is a sin, it is not trusting God.
- G. Worrying is like getting a speeding ticket, it is a waste of money. Giving your money away for doing wrong. Worrying is a waste of your time.

T12. Conclusion

- A. FASTING combats the Lust of the Flesh.
- B. PRAYER combats the Pride of Life.
- C. ALMSGIVING combats Lust of the Eyes.
- D. What if I told that God was your Father and He was watching over every need of yours? All that He asks is that you trust Him and do everything for Him. Would you worry if this was true?
 - 1) Would you worry, if God came here in the flesh and said, "I know everyone of your names, and I know your needs, and I will take care of your needs, if you seek Me first." How many of you would leave here worried? Nobody!
 - 2) You would leave here with a sense of Wow! – This is a Good Deal! That is the Deal we have!
- E. This is the truth, Jesus said I know what you need, I will take care of it. You practice these three forms of piety, fighting those three major sins.
 - 1) You develop a life of virtue, by not just praying for it, but by doing something. Virtue is the habitual habit of doing good.
 - 2) To live a virtuous life takes practice – God calls us to practice, practice, practice.
- F. That is what God has called us to. Sermon on the Mount is a tough way to walk. Chapter 5 seemed almost impossible, but He is showing us here how we do it, we are related to the Father. We can trust Him.