

# ***Bible Study***

## ***Gods Word in Focus***



**Week Thirty One**

**Sermon on the Mount**

***Part Two of Two***

# Charitable Deeds/Prayer/Fasting

Matthew 6:1-18

Why did Jesus single out prayer, fasting, and almsgiving for his disciples? The Jews considered these three as the cardinal works of the religious life. These were seen as the key signs of a pious person, the three great pillars on which the good life was based.

Jesus pointed to the heart of the matter. Why do you pray, fast, and give alms? To draw attention to yourself so that others may notice and think highly of you? Or to give glory to God?

The Lord warns his disciples of self-seeking glory -- the preoccupation with looking good and seeking praise from others. True piety is something more than feeling good or looking holy. True piety is loving devotion to God.

It is an attitude of awe, reverence, worship and obedience. It is a gift and working of the Holy Spirit that enables us to devote our lives to God with a holy desire to please him in all things (Isaiah 11:1-2).

# Riches in Heaven

## Matthew 6:19-23

Jesus used the images of treasure and eyesight to convey the hidden truth of God's kingdom. What Jesus said about treasure made perfect sense to his audience: *keep what lasts!* Aren't we all trying to find the treasure which brings security and happiness?

Jesus contrasts two very different kinds of wealth — material and spiritual goods. Jesus urges his disciples to get rich by investing in that which truly lasts, not just for a life-time, but for all eternity. How attainable is this heavenly treasure and can we enjoy it now, or must we wait for it in the after-life?

The treasure of God's kingdom is both a present and future reality for those who seek it. What is this treasure which Jesus offers so freely? It is the joy of knowing the living God, being united with him, and receiving the inheritance of an imperishable kingdom — a kingdom of peace, joy, and righteousness.

Since one's whole life is directed by that which he most values, to set one's heart on heavenly treasure will be to enter into a deeper and richer life with God. Which treasure do you seek, earthly or heavenly treasure?

# God and Possessions

## Matthew 6:24-34

What does “serving two masters” and “anxiety” have in common? They both have the same root problem -- being divided within oneself. The root word for “anxiety” literally means “being of two minds”.

An anxious person is often “tossed to and fro” and paralyzed by indecision. Fear of some bad outcome usually cripples those afflicted with anxiety. It’s also the case with someone who wants to submit to God but also live according to the world’s standards of success and fulfillment.

Who is the master in charge of your life? Our “master” is that which governs our thought-life, shapes our ideals, controls the desires of the heart and the values we choose to live by. We can be ruled by many different things -- the love of money or possessions, the power of position, the glamour of wealth and prestige, the driving force of unruly passions and addictions.

Ultimately the choice boils down to two: God and “mammon”. What is mammon? “Mammon” stands for “material wealth or possessions” or whatever tends to “control our appetites and desires”.

# Judging

Matthew 7:1-5

Everybody is a critic, but nobody wants to be judged or condemned. Then why is judgementalism so rampant, even among Christians?

"Thinking the best of other people" is necessary if we wish to grow in love. And kindness in judgment is nothing less than a sacred duty. The Rabbis warned people: "He who judges his neighbor favorably will be judged favorably by God."

How easy it is to misjudge and how difficult it is to be impartial in judgment. Our judgment of others is usually "off the mark" because we can't see inside the person, or we don't have access to all the facts, or we are swayed by instinct and unreasoning reactions to people.

It is easier to find fault in others than in oneself.

# The power of prayer and the golden rule

Matthew 7:6-14

What can pearls teach us about God's truth and holiness? In the ancient world pearls were of very great value and were even considered priceless. They were worn as prized jewels to make a person appear more beautiful and magnificent to behold.

Holiness, likewise, is a very precious jewel that radiates the beauty of God's truth, goodness, and glory. God offers us the precious gift of his holiness so that we may radiate the splendor of his truth and goodness in the way we think, speak, act, and treat others.

We can reject or ignore this great gift, or worse yet, we can drag it through the mud of sinful behavior or throw it away completely.

# False and True Teaching

Matthew 7:15-20

What do grapes, thorns, figs, and thistles have to teach us about the kingdom of God? The imagery used by Jesus would have been very familiar to his audience. A certain thornbush had berries which resembled grapes. And a certain thistle had a flower, which at least from a distance, resembled the fig. Looks can fool us.

How do you know when someone or something is genuine? Jesus' warning about false prophets and teachers applies today as well. What's the test of a true or false teacher?

Jesus connects *soundness* with *good fruit*. Something is sound when it is free from defect, decay, or disease and is healthy. Good fruit is the result of sound living — living according to moral truth and upright character.

The prophet Isaiah warned against the dangers of falsehood: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness* (Isaiah 5:20).

# The true disciple of Jesus

Matthew 7:21-29

If the threat of disaster were to come your way, would you be ready to meet it and overcome it? When Jesus told the story of the builders he likely had the following proverb in mind: *When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm for ever* (Proverbs 10:25).

What's the significance of the story for us? The kind of foundation we build our lives upon will determine whether we can survive the storms that are sure to come. Builders usually lay their foundations when the weather and soil conditions are at their best.

It takes foresight to know how a foundation will stand up against adverse conditions. Building a house on a flood plain, such as a dry river-bed, is a sure bet for disaster! Jesus prefaced his story with a warning: We may fool humans with our speech, but God cannot be deceived. He sees the heart as it truly is — with its motives, intentions, desires, and choices (Psalm 139:2).

There is only one way in which a person's sincerity can be proved, and that is by one's practice. Fine words can never replace good deeds. Our character is revealed in the choices we make, especially when we must choose between what is true or false, and good or evil.