



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew

Chapter 6

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Introduction

The "Sermon On The Mount" Continues :

- Performing acts of righteousness in ways that please God
- The danger of materialism and overcoming anxiety about such things
- Making the kingdom of God and His righteousness our number one priority



An Overview

- Chapter 5 spoke to what the inner attitudes of Jesus' disciples should be
- Chapter 6 will speak to how our inner attitudes should effect our outward appearance
- Jesus warns His disciples against external actions that are not generated from a sincere heart but offered in order to be seen and admired
- He gives three examples of acts that should be offered in secret in the private lives of Christians in order not to divert glory to God into glory to self:
 - almsgiving (Mt 6:1-4)
 - prayer (Mt 6:5-15)
 - fasting (Mt 6:16-18)

Do Good to Please God (6:1-4)



- When we practice charitable deeds we aren't to do it with appearances in mind
- Our motive should not be to impress others with our 'Christian-ness'
- True, He had required them to let their light so shine before men that they might see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven (Mt 5:16)
- But this is quite consistent with not making a display of our righteousness for self-glorification
- In fact, the doing of the former necessarily implies our not doing the latter

Do Good to Please God (6:1-4)



- Does this mean we *purposefully hide* our good deeds? No!
- It simply means we don't call attention to them
- We avoid putting ourselves in situations where we might be tempted to take the glory for something that should instead give glory to God
- He is contrasting the insincerity of the "hypocrite" with the right conduct required of His disciples
- *Openly*: Literally, in the open place, in the last day, when every secret thing is made manifest
- There is an easy way to check your motives to see if you're really doing something for the Lord or not
- Ask yourself, would you still do this good deed if you knew that no one else would ever know you did it?



The Model Prayer (6:5-15)

- The second example of the right and wrong kind of righteousness is now given
- That men ought to pray is assured
- The wrong way is that of the hypocrites, the men who make a public show of their devotions that they may have the name of holiness
- The Pharisees made all the efforts to be in some public place, where they could attain an attitude of prayer in the sight of many observers
- Private devotions are meant, nor is this designed to prohibit prayers in public assemblies
- The Lord Himself both prayed in the mountain alone (Mt 14:23), in the night alone (Lk 6:12), and in public in the presence of his disciples



The Model Prayer (6:5-15)

- It may mean that literally we pray in a confined space to avoid earthly distractions, or He may be referring figuratively to the "inner room" of our inner-most hearts and minds when we shut out the distractions of the world and focus entirely on speaking with God
- The second interpretation is the way St. Augustine interpreted His words: *What are those bed chambers but just our hearts themselves ... Hence the door is to be shut, i.e. the fleshly sense is to be resisted, so that the spiritual prayer may be directed to the Father, which is done in the inmost heart, where prayer is offered to the Father which is in secret*
- Whether literally or figuratively, we must be able to pray in a way where one's complete attention can turn to God



The Model Prayer (6:5-15)

- What is forbidden is not much praying, nor praying in the same words (the Lord did both)
- 1 Kings 18:26 gives an example of the repetitions of the heathen
- Jesus instructs us as his disciples to have meaningful prayer, not pointless, heartless, religious-speak
- Remember, you have a two-way relationship with God
- Our prayers should reflect that there is, in fact, a relationship
- He is addressing His own disciples
- The poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, hungry and thirsty souls, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, who allow themselves to have all manner of evil said against them for the Son of man's sake



The Model Prayer (6:5-15)

- In short, He is addressing the new-born children of God, who, making their Father's interests their own, are here assured that their Father, in return, makes their interests His, and needs neither to be told nor to be reminded of their wants
- Yet He will have His children pray to Him, and links all His promised supplies to their petitions for them; thus encouraging us to draw near and keep near to Him, to talk and walk with Him, to open our every case to Him, and assure ourselves that thus asking we shall receive—thus seeking we shall find—thus knocking it shall be opened to us



The Model Prayer (6:5-15)

- This passage is referred to as “The Lord’s Prayer,”
- Of the seven petitions of the Lord's prayer the first three are on behalf of the cause of God: the glory of His name, the extension of His kingdom, and the prevalence of His will
- The other four pertain to our individual needs
- No one can offer the first three petitions who is in disobedience
- Our Father, who is in heaven... The relationship aspect is established right away
- We are His children and He is our loving Father
- These words reveal a very tender relationship between God and the true worshiper
- This concept of God as ‘Father’ was completely new to the disciples listening to Jesus’ words at the time



The Model Prayer (6:5-15)

- Hallowed : Holy, sacred, revered
- The Messiah's kingdom had not yet come
- For this coming we may now pray
- The purpose of prayer is to establish God's will, not our own will, on earth
- God gives us the opportunity to participate in what HE is doing
- We pray that God's perfect purpose will be accomplished on earth, just as it is in Heaven
- None can pray thus who have not merged their own wills into the divine will
- He, in effect, prays the prayer of Gethsemane, Not my will, but thine, be done (Lk 22:42)
- It is mockery for disobedient lips to utter such a prayer



The Model Prayer (6:5-15)

- We are bidden to ask for our bread, not for future years, but for this day
- The Greek word for debt here implies sin
- Let it be noted with emphasis that God is asked to forgive us as we forgive others
- We ask, in other words, that He may mete out to us what we measure to others
- The thought is that God may preserve us from temptations that might lead us astray
- No man can pray these words who does not try to keep out of temptation

The Model Prayer (6:5-15)



- Scholars have suggested that it was common for Rabbis to teach their disciples a specific prayer to unify and identify them as a community
- It is this prayer of the Son that unifies and identifies us as children in the family of His Father
- St. Augustine says that the Lord's Prayer is so perfect that it sums up in only a few words everything man needs to petition God



The Model Prayer (6:5-15)

- Our Lord makes it a condition of our obtaining forgiveness, that we shall have a merciful, forgiving spirit
- Being unwilling to forgive others shows how little we really appreciate the forgiveness God has granted us
- If we really recognize our own sin before God, and understand the degree to which God went to forgive us of that sin, we should respond by granting others that same grace and mercy
(Eph 4:31-32; Col 2:12-15)

Fasting to Be Seen Only by God (6:16-18)



- This is the third example of the right and wrong way of righteousness, in contrast
- The same principle of doing nothing for mere show is still insisted upon
- Fasting is not wrong, and, indeed, is often blessed richly, but not when our object is to appear to men to fast
- The idea behind fasting is that during this time you are focused entirely on the spiritual, rather than the physical
- Do not assume any new appearance, or change your appearance or dress
- Our self-denial must be for the eyes of God, not of men



Lay Up Treasures in Heaven (6:19-21)

- Jesus contrasts treasure on earth with treasure in heaven
- Unused garments often become moth-eaten; unused coins sometimes rust
- Earthly treasures are temporary and quickly evaporate
- Riches are no sin in themselves, but the improper use of riches is a sin
- Eternal treasures last forever
- Wealth used for doing good is treasure laid up in heaven
- This is the only way to save our wealth
- Our wealth must be consecrated to God and used as His work demands
- What treasures are you investing in?

The Lamp of the Body (6:22-23)



- If one's eye is diseased, all he sees is wrong
- So the mind, or conscience, is the light of the soul
- If these be darkened, all is darkness; if these see aright, all is light
- What kind of “sight” do you have?
- Where are your eyes directed?
- Are you seeing clearly into the eternal?
- Or are you focused on the worries of this world?
- If the light of your life is the darkness of this world, how dark your life will be!
- Take off the blinders! Focus on Jesus!

You Cannot Serve God and Riches (6:24)



- The word Mammon means money or riches
- It is here personified as an idol
- Mammon originally meant trust, or confidence, and riches is the trust of worldly men
- If God is not the object of supreme trust, something else will be, and it is more likely to be money
- Are you a slave to Christ or a slave to your possessions?
- Does Jesus dictate your daily walk?
- Or does your desire for money, fame, and recognition have more influence?
- You cannot serve in the kingdom of light if the world of darkness possesses you
- Do not allow yourself to become a servant to the desires of this world



Do Not Worry (6:25-34)

- *“don’t worry about your life.”* That is the message of the rest of this chapter
- Jesus encourages us to have a heavenly perspective, not an earthly one
- God gave the life, and it is higher than food
- If He gave it, He will see that it is sustained, if you trust in Him
- So, too, He made the body
- He will see that it is clothed
- God feeds the birds without their sowing or reaping, but they do the work for which they were created, and God takes care of them
- He will take care of us the same way-not in laziness or carelessness, but if we do the work for which God created us



Do Not Worry (6:25-34)

- What is the use of anxiety?
- Who, by his anxiety, can add anything to life's journey ?
- Diligently consider this, lay it earnestly to heart, and let your confidence be unshaken in the God of infinite reward and love
- While the lilies do not toil or spin, they do their work, draw up sustenance from the earth, and drink in the dew, rain and sunbeams
- So we are to do our appointed work
- If we do this, trusting in God, He will supply all our needs
- To the Jew the court of Solomon was the highest representation of human glory
- Solomon, the richest and most magnificent king of Israel, was not clothed in a robe of "so pure a white" as the lily that grows wild in the field



Do Not Worry (6:25-34)

- Christ alarms both the luxury of the rich in their superfluities, and the distrust of the poor as to the necessities of life
- Let man, who is made for God and eternity, learn from a flower of the field
- All our anxiety, worries, and distrusts proceed from lack of faith
- The expression, "Little-faithed ones" is His way of gently reproaching the spirit of unbelief
- Do your duty, with a full trust in God that He will see that you do not lack for these things

Do Not Worry (6:25-34)



- Those who are in need of the true doctrines of religion, and unacquainted with proper dependence on Divine Providence, make it their chief anxiety thus to seek food and clothing
- But you have a heavenly Father, and He knows that you need of all these things
- If we are chasing after the worries of this world, how will we be any different from unbelievers?
- In part, what makes us, as Christians, distinct from the world is the very fact that we KNOW that we can rely on our Father in heaven to care for us
- We aren't driven by the need to satisfy the flesh, because we understand that all things work for the good for those who love the Lord

Do Not Worry (6:25-34)



- The promise is made that if we seek it first, and its righteousness, all earthly wants will be supplied
- The righteousness that God bestows upon those who are in the Kingdom, Christ's righteousness, the forgiveness of sins in His name
- Have no anxiety about tomorrow
- We should not foolishly increase our present burden by borrowing trouble about tomorrow



Conclusion

- How does Christ say we should give alms?
- When is it appropriate to tell or show our good works before men?
- What does Christ say about fasting?
- What is the “light of the body”?
- Where do we pray? Can we pray publicly?
- What does your Father know before you ask him?



Conclusion

- Why is that the earth is no longer home for Christians?
- Can wealth change the effectiveness of a believer?
- What does Jesus mean when He says: *Sufficient for a day is its own evil?*
- What does Christ say our principle concern should be?
- Finish this verse: ""No one can serve two . . . ""
- What does Christ say is necessary for us to be forgiven of our sins?