

Appear Unto Men to Fast

Matthew 5:42 – 6:34

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~ Our Spiritual Safari is considering the middle of the sermon the Lord Jesus Himself is giving to His disciples, Personally, on the mount. If ever there has been a hell-fire sermon – this is it, my beloved! We left our last report on fire of hell and literally ran out of that report screaming for help. We're examining the life in a relationship that we, as subjects, have to the Lord Jesus Christ as King in the Kingdom of God. So, we're going to fan the flames to red hot again – I promise you that - as we consider alms, fasting and riches. Our last report wore us out; and this one will, too – but this is all very important if you want to line your life up with Gods plan for it and find yourself in His direct will. This section of Scripture provides us a prophetic view of the citizen in Heaven living in the Millennial Kingdom. Business could never be conducted today on the basis of law that we are learning. An Archbishop in Ireland decades ago said, "....it is impossible for England to conduct its business based on the Sermon on the Mount." Well, I second the bishop. All of this can only be enforced when Christ sits on the Throne, literally and physically. I think we have made that point painfully clear in our deconstruction of the last two reports.

Intriguingly, it seems the wealthier the church the more closely they think they adhere to this Sermon on the Mount. Well, write to any rich man asking for money and see how far you get with him. The rich have a grandiose scheme that they call a program to help the poor, but it doesn't include their money – it ONLY includes YOUR money! You're going in circles with these people because they say they live by the Sermon on the Mount, but they are so far from living it that all they can see is that neither do you! They say this is a great document and have a positive day and that's the end of their religion. They tell you to let them know if you ever need anything, but you'd be a fool to ask for their help – because you won't get it. They'll talk to you all about it on Sunday but tell you they have to get back to you – and then – Monday morning, it's back to cold-blooded godless capitalism and an indifferent business world that has no plan for the inclusion of Christ.

The genuine child of God will see this great principal: that we are to esteem others better than ourselves and consider the welfare of others above our own. That works out in reality when we are helpful to others in need. There are many fine Christians who could help other true believers; and it's only acts of love that precede the preaching of the Gospel, by the way, friends – it NEVER follows – ALWAYS precedes. Our fruit should show us perfected even as our Father Who is in Heaven is perfect. How can we do that except we be accepted in the beloved? We can't. That's what it means to be IN Christ. We are talking about those who are IN Christ Jesus who have no condemnation. This realization of faith is where the slow process of sanctification begins in our lives.

The Mosaic System of Levitical Law should be a goal; but to think we can attain to it in our own strength is where people fail miserably with God. If you think you are going to keep this law and bring the glory to God He's not even going to accept you that way. Why? Because you are still not doing it His way! We have a lot of religion today that has kids sticking their thumbs in a pie and pulling out plums and thinking they did something fantastic. They simply do not give Christ the glory. That's His way – but they usurp His glory by falsely claiming that they live up to His standard. It's purely unadulterated blaspheme. Their reality is that they are sitting in the corner mumbling nursery rhymes. I know they think they are learned, educated – and smart. God calls them fools – and worse: children of the devil.

We're not finished talking about the righteousness His subjects must possess in the Kingdom of Heaven, friends. I know this is severe. That righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees – and yours doesn't. The scribes and Pharisees had an incredible externally religious false righteousness. Nicodemus was an outstanding religious man and in his community. There wasn't much to criticize about old man Nikki when Jesus said to him, "you must be born again." We have to have a righteousness that is superior to religion in order to have a meaningful relationship with God; and that can only come through trusting Christ as our Savior.

Right now, we are talking about the righteousness that His subjects are to practice as a matter of routine. The genuine Christian will WANT to be

properly dressed, clean and well-mannered. They want to glorify Christ, my beloved. We can't do that when we are dirty, offensive and obnoxious. Those who think otherwise are simply wrong. Motivation and intent is all important when doing something for the cause of Christ. This is strictly a two-party resolution. All third parties are specifically excluded. This is between your soul and the Lord your God. God wants you to consider, very practically, these issues before you of ostentation in alms, prayer, fasting, money and taking preparation, thought and care for your future days....

V

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

~ We'll be dealing with the externalities of religion in chapter six. Giving is something that must remain between you and God. Giving is strictly a private transaction between you and the Lord or, my friends, your giving is

not recognized. There is a whole lot – and I mean a WHOLE lot - of Christian giving going on that should not be going on in the church. We should never give to be seen by others – including the church. If you're giving for a tax write-off – it is a sin for you. Period. Full stop. This section of our Sermon on the Mount was said by the Lord Jesus Christ – and it isn't pretty. He determined Himself to mentally rape the Pharisees with biting sarcasm and damning condemnation – and He is the Master of doing so. The custom of the Pharisees was to go down to the street corner and blow a trumpet under the guise that the poor would know they were ready to give something away. Of course, it also let everyone else know what and where the giving was going on. The Pharisee loved to give that way. They ONLY gave that way.

How about you, friends? Do you give to the work of the Lord? How much do you give? Who do you give it to? Do you give where you receive your blessings? Do you receive a proper, correct and complete Bible study and then give your money to some man who says he's feeding dogs in the Aleutian Islands? How do you know he's feeding dogs? Maybe you support little orphan babies. How many kids do you think are fed with your money? What are they being fed? How much research did you do on the church that receives your donations? Do you have to make sure your name is on the envelope? Do you insist on being recognized? Do you only give when, where and because they will recognize you? If you cannot answer all of those questions intelligently, without reservation and without conviction you are spiritually impoverished – if not completely spiritually dead! I'm sure many people in the church today have no clue they are even a liberal to begin with....

VI

1 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.

2 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.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

5 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.

~ Someone says, "....oh, my!" The Lord Jesus sure uses some strong language sometimes, doesn't He? Well, friends, you haven't seen anything yet! It's going to get so strong that some of you will have to stop reading. Men who run around wearing a Prayer Shaw today – and there are many of them – have their reward right there. That means their prayers don't make it past the roof. Most of them never pray anyways and my experience is that most of them will even argue that they don't need to confess anything. They know YOU need to confess a few things. YOU certainly need to pray; but not them. If there's no roof blocking their prayers those prayers just blow away in the wind.

Who do we think we are kidding, my beloved? The Bible is the only cure for the fatal spiritual cancer of sin. You have been diagnosed with a malignant black death - the sin cancer - and God says He is going to perform an operation to cut it out of His children! Why? - To hurt you? No; to save you - that you might have LIFE and that more abundantly! Will it hurt? Yes; the good news is there is a one hundred percent success rate with His surgery! It's time to come under His anesthesia and get this operation over with so you can begin your recovery. Let us pray....

6 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.

~ Notice the revolutionary new term that comes now on the scene when Jesus says, "Thy Father." No prophet in the Old Testament ever called God

“Father.” This is the family of God and only the families of God reside in the Kingdom of Heaven. To every one that would receive Him gave He them the right and the authority to be a son of God. Those who do no more than simply believe on His name shall be saved; albeit many shall be saved so as by fire. This means there are two ways Christ saves people, friends. A good way and a better way! Which do you want? Will you settle for second best? The Christian race is an event; do you want a red or white ribbon? Or do you want a blue ribbon? Do you want to call God Father? There is no closer relationship than a son and his father. I know we have perverted the family on earth in our contemporary society; but, naturally speaking, the entire nation was called Israel, my son; but NOT the entire nation Israel is the remnant that is saved! Paul said, “...all Israel is not Israel.” We see a new relationship with God that didn’t exist in Genesis – but God didn’t change, either. No, He changed US....

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

~ First of all, try beginning your prayers with the confession of your sins. See how that goes for you. Most people had BETTER be in a closet when they do! The next time you are unfortunate enough to be pigeon-holed into hearing a public, audible prayer – count the repetitions and you’ll probably find that the prayer or message is going nowhere. It’s usually just stuck in the mud spinning its wheels. God says to His children, “don’t do that.” Actually, we only have to ask the Lord one time and He hears us. These Pharisees theorized that a five hour prayer with “much speaking,” asking for probably just three things, would force God into action. God says, “don’t do that, please....”

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

~ Genuine sincerity must be the mark of any reverent prayer. We go into the Throne Room, lay hold of the Sceptre when it is raised to us, bow with our eyes closed and our face to the ground - and praise Him. He already knows what we need. Then, we can see where it goes from there! This idea that you’re going to break down the door all covered in sin and start

making demands of God is for laughable fools! The Bible doesn't teach anything like that. The Lord does not hear the prayers of the man that regards iniquity in His heart – Psalm sixty-six verse eighteen. If you don't have the sin question settled then you are absolutely wasting your time praying for anything other than redemption. Let's STOP wasting God's time with the utter nonsense and meaninglessness of foolish, lustful, selfish demands we disguise as prayer.

Remember, God says, "you ask and have not because you ask that you might consume such things in your own lusts." Until you get into the will of God you're going nowhere with Him today, it's really just that simple. There are some Christians that are clinging to less than five verses in the Bible. That's their entire religion. Their faith is like a ship that has exploded and they're just grasping at straws to try to stay alive. Why don't you try getting down to the nitty-gritty of a real and meaningful conversation with God? Why don't you try telling Him the details of your sins that He already knows anyways? Do you feel like you can tell the Lord Jesus right NOW what's on your mind? Can you tell Jesus that you love Him right now? If the answer is no: you're not a child of God....

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

~ Inevitably, we come to the so-called Lord's Prayer in this report; and we have several things to say regarding it. I don't want to be ugly just for the sake of being ugly in this report, friends; but I do keep it real. I shudder to see the Sunday morning crowd praying, "...give us this day our daily bread" when they are going to a restaurant after the church service where they'll each eat enough for five starving people. I don't see that as very meaningful; and there is a problem with doing it. At least, God says there is a problem with that. Taken in a spiritual context there just aren't many people asking for the Lord to give them MORE of the Word of God. That reveals a deep insincerity with the Lord. So, what we have is a section of the Bible where a lot of vain repetitious praying takes root. Jesus, says, "please don't do that." Naturally, this isn't the Lord's prayer because Jesus couldn't pray these things. When He joins us saying, "Father," that has a completely different meaning for you and Him. Their relationship is in deity

– not through a begotten creation - although it was that, also – with Christ the Father. That means a position - and not just a begetting. Christ was begotten. We join the family of God only through faith in Him....

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

~ This prayer is worthy for anyone in any age, of course. I'm not discounting any of it at all; but remember, Christ IS our daily bread. Christ didn't have any sin so He didn't have any debts. They happen to be directly correlated, too. This should be called the Disciples Prayer. Verse thirteen should read: LEAVE us not in testing; and we're going to leave it at that for now but we will see this again and we'll get more details as we go. This is definitely a marvelous prayer for a new believer as a template, sort of. If it's used privately to learn to pray then it's great. If you don't know how to pray then you can just repeat this over and over again. If you're sincere, the Holy Spirit will bring you into learning about how to pray your own prayers. I still use a version of a Childs Prayer just about every time. It goes like this: "...now I lay me down to sleep and pray the Lord my soul will keep and that I'll die before I wake so I may become absent from this body and present with You, Lord." Yes, I realize it goes off track and gets a little dark. It works for ME....

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 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.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

16 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.

~ Alright, we must have a fast word about fasting since we just prayed for our daily bread: if you're going to fast I don't want to know - and your friends and brethren don't care. If you will quietly keep it between you and the Lord – great – but the minute you bring in a third party, God doesn't recognize it as sincere. At that point, you are simply self-depriving for your own edification – or whatever reason. See, God never gave Israel fasting days; God ONLY gave His chosen people feasting days. There is no merit in depriving yourself physically unless you have a completely private, vital, living and sincere prayer life to begin with – which means confession of our sins - in detail....

17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

18 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.

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

~ Let's talk about money now because this is one area most people don't like the preacher to preach on. Money is, naturally, very material. Jesus is talking about the Millennial Kingdom on earth in this Sermon on the Mount. So, how are we going to gather up a material treasure in Heaven? Well, you are either going to lose your material possessions - or they're going to lose YOU when you die! Why not invest all of that in Heaven? There is but ONE way to invest in Heaven – by giving to the Lord's work. You better make sure you know all about that "....Lords work" you support, too, by the way - and investigate every expenditure they make before you

give there. It is incumbent upon you to make sure you're giving to a program that will be a treasure in Heaven. That, by de facto, means it must include getting the Word of God to a lost and dying world in sound doctrine. Frankly, that is the only laudable motive for giving according to the Lord Jesus. Why? Because where your heart is your treasure will be also. If you get enough of the Word of God in your heart then your treasure will be in Heaven. If you get enough money in the bank – then all you will think about is the bank. There is a big danger of worshipping Mammon. It's very easy to do; and there is more than one way to deny the Word of God, friends. Indifference to others needs, misappropriation of God's money, and not studying the Bible properly, completely and correctly are three great ways to deny Christ right now. Is this getting personal again? It should be! This goes beyond money, and it includes all material things....

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

~ Remember, this section of Scripture is the law for the future coming Kingdom Age concerning riches. So, all of this must be taken in that context and all six verses - nineteen through twenty-four – must be considered together. To oversimplify this passage, if you don't have the enlightenment of the Word of God you will waste your reward in Heaven; and that which you give, though you think it is right giving, will, actually be wrong. Today, we have a whole lot of people giving to the wrong thing and calling it the Lord's work; but God doesn't use their giving, doesn't bless the giving and doesn't even want them to give in the first place. It happens all the time; and misappropriated giving is SIN that you will be held accountable for. This is very serious business, friends. Make a note....

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek): for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof ~

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