

Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 6:1-34

“HUMBLE Faith”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

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Teaching: Jesus is still in the middle of the famous “Sermon on the Mount” as we pick it up in **chapter 6** this morning. He’s teaching from atop a hill with His disciples surrounding Him and a multitude of seekers and scoffers listening in from a little further down the hill.

Back in **chapter 5, verse 20**, Jesus said ...

“... unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The point being that outward actions will never be enough to “earn” Heaven. And throughout this section, Jesus says again and again “It’s not about your outwardly righteous acts ... it’s about your heart”.

And here in **chapter 6**, He continues that same line of teaching. Despite the variety of topics, He circles a central theme ... what I would call the heart condition of “humble faith”.

And neither true humility nor steadfast faith is as easy as it may sound.

I don’t care how humble you think you are ... you’re just like me ... prideful. We all love ourselves.

But it always surprises me how often people will argue ... “I don’t love myself ... I don’t even like myself”.

Q. But if we really didn’t love or even like ourselves, do you realize how different things would be? –

- 1.** We wouldn’t eat, because if we didn’t like ourselves we’d be happy to see ourselves go hungry.
- 2.** We wouldn’t comb our hair or brush our teeth, because the worse we looked the better we’d like it.
- 3.** We wouldn’t be here this morning, because going to Hell would be a cause to rejoice if we really didn’t like ourselves.

So ... undeniably ... we love ourselves. That’s why we want good things to happen to us.

Pride's an area of our flesh that must be constantly checked and crucified. And it's a subject that the Lord takes very seriously ... because pride is virtually incompatible with faith (meaning ... a trust in God):

- 1.** When I'm feeling proud ... I'm not trusting in God ... I'm trusting in me!
- 2.** And pride always causes us to become discontent with our circumstances. We begin to think that we deserve better than what we have rather than trusting that God's given us all we need ... and that that's enough!
- 3.** And finally, pride causes us to do things for the wrong reasons. We do things ... not out of a faithful trust in God, but out of prideful motivations.

And it's that final consequence of pride, and how it undermines faith, that Jesus tackles as we pick it up in **chapter 6**.

Verse 1:

Q. Are you willing to forgo the instant gratification of a pat on the back?

Q. Are you willing to trust that God saw your kind act and will richly reward you for it ... even though no other human being is aware of it? -- That's humble faith!

Verses 2-4:

Jeremiah 17:10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. NKJV

The fruit of our doing will be the result, not of our actions, but of the motivation of our heart. In this case ... our willingness to give as the Lord leads.

Our giving ... whether it's of our money ... our time ... our talents ... or any other resource ... must be entirely independent of man's approval or praise.

Verses 5-8: Every 1st and 3rd Friday evening we have, what we call a "RECHARGE Service". And I'm so often blessed by some people's humility in prayer. Some people seem to have such an ability to disregard what others might think and just humbly pour their hearts out to God.

And that's really the point Jesus is making here.

Q. When you pray in public ... what's your primary concern? -- Prayer can come in a variety of forms, but by my observation there's the big three:

- 1.** Public prayer that's aimed more at the people within earshot than at God.

2. Public prayer that's aimed at God, but is so guarded because of what others might think that it's not an honest reflection of what's in your heart.

3. And genuine prayer that comes from the heart and is offered to the Lord without regard to who's listening or what they might think.

The Word gives us many illustrations and examples of prayer, but the one that best exemplifies this contrast is the parable that Jesus gives us in ...

Luke 18:10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men -- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' (emphasis added) NKJV

One prayer for man to hear and one for God.

Prayer is just a two-way conversation between us and God.

Think back, if you can, to your childhood. Think of a three or four-year-old. They're completely dependent upon their parents.

And it's that same type of honest and dependent communication that God wants from us in prayer. It's just being real in conversation with your Father!

Lastly, Jesus warns us against "vain repetition" in our prayer ... for the same reason. If God wants our prayers to come from our hearts ... no memorized or recited prayer could ever achieve that.

Job 35:13 Surely God will not listen to empty talk, Nor will the Almighty regard it. NKJV

Verses 9-13: The fact that this falls on the heels of the Lord's warning NOT to pray in "vain repetition" ... makes it crystal clear that this was never intended to be anything more than a model or example ... a "template".

But it is that ... a template and as such, note with me the three primary components ... because they're the same three components that should be a part of our prayers; Worship, Petition and Intercession.

Worship ...
 Petition and ...
 Intercession

But preceding even those three components... is relationship! He says "**Our Father**".

If you're not a child of God, the only prayer He will hear from you is the one that says "God I know I'm a sinner and I need Jesus to save me" (**John 9:31**). We must have a relationship with the Lord before any form of legitimate prayer can even take place.

But then ... Worship ...

Petition and ...

Intercession

1. "**Hallowed (or Holy) be Your name**" He says.

Then **verse 10** "Your will Lord ... not mine ... be done, because Your ways God ... are what's right for me".

2. Then humble petition based on complete dependency ... "Lord ... give us just enough food for today". It's not just a request for nourishment, but it's also a prayer that says, "Lord keep me dependent upon You".

"And Father ... forgive the debt we owe You ... forgive our failures and shortcomings ... just as quickly and thoroughly as we forgive the debts, failures and shortcomings of others".

Now as you look at **verse 13** ... make sure you're seeing it through the lens of **James 1:13** which says ...

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

Matthew 6:13 is written in what the experts call a permissive imperative, which means the prayer is really "Lord, don't allow us to be tempted", because, although God doesn't bring the temptation ... He does allow it.

So, the permissive imperative is "God please don't give Satan permission to tempt me".

Then He closes the prayer with "**Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever**".

3. And one last thing ...

Q. Did you notice that there's not a single personal pronoun in this prayer? -- Not a "me" or "I" anywhere in it.

Q. When's the last time you prayed a prayer that didn't contain one single personal pronoun? – I certainly don't believe the Lord's telling us we can't or shouldn't pray for ourselves, but in this prayer template ... the emphasis seems to be on the body of Christ in an intercessory way.

Verses 14-15: Strong words that are written in an imperative tone ... meaning that, according to Jesus ... “Forgiving others is NOT optional”.

It’s the same imperative tone that we saw in our study of “The Beatitudes”.

Remember a Christian disciple is one who follows or mimics Jesus and to mimic Him is to forgive. If you are His follower then you WILL forgive because forgiving others is a natural byproduct of a relationship with Jesus.

Verse 16-18: If you’ve been with us, then you’ll remember looking at the act of fasting in a recent study. The conclusion being that there’s no doubt that fasting does have a place in the life of today’s Christian; Jesus fasted in **Matthew 4**, His disciples fasted in the **13th chapter of Acts** and in **this passage** Jesus says “**but you, when you fast**”. Not “if”, but “when”.

And remember ... fasting isn’t limited to food. Fasting is simply depriving the flesh, for the sake of the spirit. It’s not about punishing the body ... it’s about removing some distraction and replacing it with things of the Lord.

And the Lord’s instructions here ... are a continuation of His warnings about our motivations. Whether it’s our giving or our prayer life or our fasting ... our motivation is infinitely more important than the activities themselves.

Verses 19-21: Humble Faith! Listen and then decide if you really believe what **James** says in ...

4:14 ... you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

Q. How about this one ...?

1st Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. NKJV

See ... if we truly believe the words of **James 4:14** and **1st Thessalonians 4:17** ... then following Jesus’ advice here in **Matthew 6**, should be easy.

Q. So is it? –

19 “Do not store up ... treasures on earth ... 20 But store up ... treasures in heaven ...

Verses 22-24: Don’t disconnect from the **preceding verses** ... Jesus is still talking about our treasures and our heart-level pursuit of those treasures.

So, in context ... what the passage is saying is;

If you see with spiritual eyes, you'll store up your treasures in Heaven, but if you see only with your physical eyes, you'll invest your resources of time, energy, money and possessions into things that only profit you in this life.

And the comparison is as striking as the difference between a brightly lit soul and a very dark one.

And no matter what your intellect might tell you ... no matter what Satan might whisper in your ear ... you can NOT serve two masters! A slave can only be owned by one master!

Verses 25-32: There's a true and valuable cliché' that says ...

"Worry is assuming responsibility for things God never intended you to have".

In other words, we come back to humble faith.

Now ... it's not that you shouldn't be a responsible, hard-working individual ... the Bible clearly tells us that both are Christ-like qualities that are pleasing to the Father.

But there's a difference between being a responsible individual and being a worried one.

Christians with a solid sense of responsibility solve the problems that have been assigned to them ... and they pray about the rest.

Worried people, on the other hand ... they fuss over things never assigned to them. They become miserable and make others miserable.

So ... DO NOT assume responsibility for things that God has not assigned to you.

And ... if you find yourself feeling concerned about something that falls into that category ... pray about it ... and don't stop praying about it until you're no longer concerned about it!

Verse 33: It's so often quoted ... I wonder if we even hear it anymore ...

"... seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Sounds like Humble Faith!

Seek the Lord before anything and everything else in your life. Make Him priority #1!

Verse 34: A verse that should reassure us all that Jesus did in fact, walk in our shoes. He really does understand how difficult most days are in this world.

That why He says here ... just take it one day at a time.

Again ... “Worry is assuming responsibility for things God never intended you to have”.

You can't reach tomorrow from here ... so you surely can't fix it! To worry about the future is to worry about the “**what if's**” of life!

And I don't care how good you are at worrying. I don't care if you've been practicing it all your life. I don't care if you're a genuine professional at it ... not one single problem has EVER been solved by worrying about it! Not one!

Conclusion: We're gonna take a few minutes this morning for silent prayer because these areas that Jesus has touched on ... these are things that can be so deeply engrained in us.

We certainly can't wish these traits away. We can't even purge ourselves of them ... but God can!

Q. Find yourself being a little bit too concerned about what other people think of you? Comparing yourself to others? – Pray and ask God to fix you!

Q. Find yourself doing things to be noticed and praised by people? -- Pray and ask God to fix you!

Q. Having a hard time extending genuine forgiveness toward him or her or them? -- Pray and ask God to fix you!

Q. Putting too much faith in yourself or others and not enough in God? -- Pray and ask Him to fix you!

Q. Are you a worrier? -- Pray and ask God to fix you!

Q. Not sure what to pray for? -- Pray and ask God to show you ... and then fix you!