**Matthew Sermon VI**

**What are you devoted to?**

**Seek First the Kingdom of God**

Last two weeks: Sermon on the Mount:

I. The ethical standard in the kingdom of God is something that the world cannot understand. Kingdom ethics include poverty of spirit toward God, mourning for personal sin, meekness to our fellow humans, burning hunger for being right with God, mercy/grace toward our fellow humans, an undivided heart toward God, and being a maker of peace.

Because of this ethical standard, we stick out. We are the light of the world.

Because Jesus is the fulfillment/completion of the Law and the Prophets, the kingdom has come in a new way. (Matthew 5:17)

Therefore:

Our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees.

II. Kingdom Practices.We avoid all bitterness and anger, we reject, not only sex outside of marriage, but lust in every form. We repudiate divorce, because God hates divorce. We turn the other cheek and go the extra mile—we are willing even to be abused for the sake of the kingdom of God, and we love our enemies.

Summary Matthew 5:48 Be perfect, complete, mature. Teleon. This is the calling in the kingdom of God. A high calling! This is a call to be like God. Be conformed to God’s character.

v. 45 If you do so you will be like God.

Today’s message is in two parts. Both have to do with motive of the heart.

I. Do not display your righteousness.

II. Seek the Kingdom of God first.

I. Matthew 6:1-18

Remember that, at first glance, this entire section seems to contradict Jesus’ command in Matthew 5:16 to “Let your light so shine before people that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven.”

Should I let people know how awesome I am as a Christian or not?

The solution to the problem is not that Jesus is confused!

Here is the point: If you serve the church or the poor, pray, fast with “mixed motives” then there will be no blessing to you.

“Mixed motives” means that you serve or give money or share your faith, or pray or go on a mission team or whatever to impress people—so that people will like you or will think that you are awesome, as opposed to doing it so as to serve someone or to glorify God.

Based on Matthew 5, parts of our Christian life are public, but they should never be to show off or to seek praise.

It is tempting to serve our community and even to love one another so that people will think our church is awesome and will want to join us. This is not necessarily bad, but… we need to take Matt 6:1-18 seriously.

Q: In your service and worship, do you have “mixed motives” Is it about being seen for you? Do you seek the praise of people?

My love language is words of affirmation, so I am particularly susceptible here.

For me, I can remember times in my Christian life when there was a reward ceremony in the church, and I was thinking about why I deserved my name to be mentioned. Ouch!

But… I do not want to lose the reward, and that is the warning here.

v. 2 “They have had their reward in full.”

Q: Who do you want your reward to come from, man or God? You cannot have it both ways.

v. 3 Jesus uses an idiom here: “Do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing.

Act it out: Hey, right hand, what are you doing? Oh, nothing!

The solution Jesus’ advice:

Let us do some things purposefully that no one will know about, and let us make this a regular habit.

Jesus provides two categories here:

1. v. 1-4 Seeking praise for your good deeds. (when you give to the needy, for example.)

2. v. 5-18 Seeking praise for your religious devotion. (when you pray or fast, praise the Lord, Halleluia)

By the way, v. 6 (go into your room) is not a proscription against public prayer. In fact, Jesus prayed in public about 60 seconds later. It is about the heart.

Jesus gives the Lord’s Prayer as a model. It is simple, to the point and is not flowery. v. 7 “do not keep on babbling.”

Also note, “When you fast.” Jesus is assuming that his followers will do fasting.

For me, category #1 (wanting my accomplishments to be noticed) is the temptation.

What about you? Are you content with serving people without any praise at all?

Do you hope people will notice how spiritual you are?

Matthew 6:15 an important passage, but we will cover it in Matthew 18:21-35—the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

Matthew 6:16-18 Another example. Jesus uses three examples. He is really into this topic. This is more important than you think!

II. Matthew 6:19-34 Kingdom values. Seek the Kingdom First.

Matthew 6:19-24

v. 19-20 Do not store up treasure on earth. Store them in heaven.

Why not? Because our citizenship is in heaven. Philippians 3:20

If an outside observer were watching your life, what country would they think you are a citizen of?

What do you meditate on? What do you dream about?

Q: What do you treasure? The return of live sports? Retirement? The latest version of Grand Theft Auto? A great vacation? A good paying job? A boy/girl friend?

We all know these are OK to have. God may even want you to have them. God wants us to have a good life here on the earth. But if you seek these things first, they will rot in your hands. If you seek the kingdom of God first, then these things can be blessings as a byproduct.

If you steal a reward, it brings no pleasure.

If you let God give it to you, it becomes a great blessing. Up to you!!!

2023 Mexican Marathon 30,000 runners. 11,000 have been disqualified for cheating!!! (chips in their race bibs) Street cars, cars and trains.

Really? Does this make you proud to “win” by cheating?

Like the movie Chariots of Fire. The two British sprinters were Eric Liddle and Harold Abrahams. Eric Liddle gave up his place on the 100 m sprint to Harold Abrahams for spiritual reasons. Harold won the gold medal, it gave him no pleasure. He had achieved his worldly goal. OK. Great. Now I have the gold medal. So what is next? He achieved his life’s goal and found it did not satisfy. But Eric Liddle was able to treasure what he had done for life. That is why we should put our treasures in heaven.

Let us seek heavenly treasures, and accept with joy if earthly pleasures come our way.

Matthew 6:22-23 The eye is the lamp of the body is probably more like the headlight of the body—helping us to find our way.

If your eye is healthy (NIV) not a good translation. literally single or sound.

If your eye is single—laser focused on the right thing, which is the kingdom of God…

Again, it is about motives.

In the margin of the NIV it also has generous. The Greek word can also mean that. It is likely that the double meaning is used on purpose.

If you are singularly focused and generous (see v. 24) with what God has given you to serve the kingdom of God, then your whole body will be full of light.

If you see the kingdom of God correctly—the need for undivided loyalty, then you get the whole enchilada.

The point. If you get this one kingdom principle right, everything else will be clear.

Matthew 6:24 Jesus makes it quite black and white. v. 24. Q: Do you love money? Let’s be honest. All of us love money to some extent. Me and money are on a friendly basis… But… Are you “devoted” to money?

This entire section is about what you devote yourself to.

What are you devoted to? Will those who know you well, will your co-workers, will your fellow students agree?

A man can have two employers, but not two owners.

Matthew 6:25 The key passage in this section. Literally “Do not give a thought to your life.” This is an incredibly high standard.

This is what it means to seek the kingdom first (Matt 6:34)—to not give a thought to your life—to your stuff.

This is the meaning of Matthew 6:22-23. It took me 35 years to “get” this passage.

Jesus is saying that if you get this principle, you get everything, but if you do not get this principle, you get nothing.

“Do not give a thought to your life” is not an excuse to be thoughtless about your life. We need to be wise in how we use our money, our time, etc. But these thoughts should not consume us. Thoughts of God and his kingdom ought to consume us.

Matthew 6:25-34 So, what do you worry about?

This could be a ninth beatitude. Blessed are they who do not worry about their lives.

v. 26, 28 What shall we eat or drink or wear, or where shall we live?

The world does enough worrying to take care of the rest of us.

Student: Do you worry about your grades and your future job?

Boy/girlfriend: Do you worry about the course of your relationship?

Parent: Do you worry about your children?

Human: Do you worry about the economy?

Citizen: Do you worry about the direction of our government, the national debt, the wars in Ukraine and Palestine?

We need to be concerned about these things, but we need to hand them to God and “worry” about the Kingdom of God.

Jesus: Look at the birds. God seems to have them covered (literally)

Look at the flowers of the fields.

Do you believe that if you seek the Kingdom of God first, that God will be able to take care of you? Really?

So, let me ask you again, what do you worry about?

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

This is the key to the entire Sermon on the Mount.

It is what putting your treasures in heaven is about. It is what “the eye is the lamp of the body” is about. It is what “Do not give a thought to your life” is about.

This is not principally about going to church and giving sacrificially. It is about the priorities of the heart being on God and his kingdom.

It is about treasuring the righteousness that comes only from him.

v. So… Let the world worry about tomorrow. Seek his kingdom and his righteousness first.

So:

1. Do not do your amazing deeds principally in order to have people think you are so awesome. Let your reward come from God, not human beings.

2. Seek the kingdom of God first.