

o6. The coming of God's kingdom : What it means to be a disciple

Part 2. Matthew 6-7



‘The Sermon on the Mount takes its readers along a way that leads them from God’s radical demands into the “interior” of faith where they experience the Father’s nearness in prayer. Then it leads them back into the praxis of renouncing possessions and of love’ (Luz I. 173)

Matthew 6:1-18 : Practices of piety :Almsgiving, Prayer & Fasting

Matthew 6:1

“But be careful not to practice your righteousness (see 5:20)
before people in order to be seen by them.
Otherwise you have no reward with your Father in heaven.

Tobit 12:8 ‘Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is
almsgiving with righteousness.’

1. Almsgiving Matthew 6:2-4

So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others.

Truly I tell you, they already have their reward.

But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘On the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all’ (Romans 2:16).

2. Prayer Matthew 6:5-6

And when you pray do not be like the hypocrites,
for they love to stand in the synagogues and on the street corners
and to pray in order to be seen by people.

Truly, I say to you: They already have their reward.

But you, when you pray,

‘go into your private room and close the door’

in order to pray to your Father who is in secret.

And your Father who sees into secret places will reward you.

John of the Cross

‘Jesus taught us only two ceremonies for use in our prayers. Our prayer should be made either in the concealment of our secret chamber : or, if not in one’s chamber, in the solitary wilderness, and, at the best and the most quiet time of night, as he did’ (Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book III.44.4).

‘Your Beloved Bridegroom is the treasure hidden in a field : the field is your soul ... Hide in the interior secret chamber off your spirit. Close the door behind you and pray to your Father in secret ...delight with him there’ (Spiritual Canticle I.9).

Matthew 6:7-8

“When you pray do not babble like the Gentiles,
for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.
Do not be like them,
for your **Father** knows what you need before you ask him.”

‘Pray without ceasing’ (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

‘Persevere in prayer’ (Romans 12:12).

Pray in this way:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

(see 26:42: agony)

Aramaic Kaddish (hymn praising the Holy One) synagogue prayer

Magnified and sanctified may his great name be
in the world that he created, as he wills,
and may his kingdom come in your life and in your days
and in the lives of all the house of Israel, swiftly and soon.

Matthew 6:11-13 (Luke 11:3-4)

Give us this day our daily [ἐπιούσιον] bread.

(the bread we really need, now)

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us into temptation, [1 Corinthians 10:13]
but rescue us from evil.

‘The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack
and save me for his heavenly kingdom.

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen’ (2 Timothy 4:18).

Matthew 6:14-15

For if you forgive others their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you;
but if you do not forgive others,
neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

‘Whenever you stand praying, forgive,
if you have anything against anyone;
so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.’
(Mark 11:25).

3. Fasting Matthew 6:16-18

When you fast, do not be like the gloomy hypocrites,
for they put on a gloomy look
so that they appear to people to be fasting.

Truly, I say to you: They already have their reward.

But you, when fasting, anoint your head and wash your face,
so that you do not appear to people to be fasting
but to your Father in secret.

And your Father who sees into secret places will reward you.”

A Heart fixed on God : Matthew 6:19-21 (Luke 12:33-34)

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal;
but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust consumes
and where thieves do not break in and steal.
For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

‘Blessed and happy are the pure in heart’ (Matthew 5:8).

A Heart fixed on God : Matthew 6:22-23 (Luke 11:34-36)

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Matthew 6:24 (Luke 16:13)

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth.

To love is to choose. To hate is to not choose

Trust in God : Matthew 6:25-27 (Luke 12:22-30)

I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

Trust in God : Matthew 6:28-33 (Luke 12:22-30)

And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith?

Do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ It is the Gentiles who strive for all these things.

Your heavenly **Father** knows that you need all these things.

Strive first for the **kingdom of God** and God’s **righteousness**, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:34

So do not worry about tomorrow.

Tomorrow will bring worries of its own.

Today's trouble is enough for today.

Matthew 7:1-2 (Luke 6:37-38)

Do not judge [κρίνετε], so that you may not be judged.
For with the judgment you make you will be judged,
and the measure you give will be the measure you get (see Mark 4:24).

{James 2:13; Romans 2:1; 1 Corinthians 4:5}

Matthew 7:3-5 (Luke 6:41-42)

Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye,
but do not notice the log in your own eye?

Or how can you say to your brother,
“Let me take the speck out of your eye,”
while the log is in your own eye?

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye,
and then you will see clearly
to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Be discerning : Matthew 7:6

Do not give what is holy to dogs;
and do not throw your pearls before swine,
or they will trample them under foot
or turn and maul you.

The Didache [9:5] applies this saying to the Eucharist: 'Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptised in the Lord's name. For concerning this also did the Lord say, 'Do not give what is holy to the dogs'.

This same reverence for what is holy obliges us not to expose to disrespect any of the revelation given to us by Jesus. The gospel is to be proclaimed with all the patience, fidelity and love of Jesus, but if people are determined to hold it up to ridicule, disciples are to 'shake the dust from their feet'(10:14) and go elsewhere.

Matthew 7:7-11 (Luke 11:9-13)

Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find;
knock, and the door will be opened for you.

For everyone who asks receives,
and everyone who seeks finds,
and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Is there anyone among you who,
if your child asks for bread, will give a stone?
Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake?

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will your Father in heaven give good things
to those who ask him!

God's intentions are always good

Matthew 7:12 (Luke 6:31)

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you;
for this is the law and the prophets. (see 5:17) (see 22:40: love)

Rabbi Hillel, the leading Rabbi in Jerusalem when Jesus was a boy, was asked to sum up the Law, and replied:

‘What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour:

that is the whole Law. The rest is commentary; go and learn it’

(The Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat II,5,31a).

Galatians 5:14

‘The whole law is summed up in a single commandment,

You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Leviticus 19:18)

Christian love = loving with Jesus’ love

Matthew 7:13-14 (Luke 13:24)

*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide
and the way is easy that leads to destruction,
and there are many who enter through that gate.*

How narrow the gate and how difficult the way that leads to life,
and there are few who find [εὐρίσκω] it.

‘I call heaven and earth to witness against you today
that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.
Choose life so that you and your descendants may live’(Deuteronomy 30:19).

‘To this people you shall say: Thus says the Lord: See,
I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death’(Jeremiah 21:8).

decidere

Matthew 7:15-20 (Luke 6:43-44)

'Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but within are rapacious wolves. You will recognise them by their fruit.

Does one gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistle bushes?

Every good tree produces useful fruit, but the bad tree produces bad fruit.

A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot produce useful fruit. *Every tree that does not produce useful fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

You will recognise prophets by their fruit.

Matthew 7:21 (see Luke 6:46)

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, *but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.*

Matthew 7:22-23 (Luke 13:27)

On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?” Then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.”

Matthew 7:24-27 (Luke 6:47-49)

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell – and how great was its fall!

Matthew 7:28-29 (Mark 1:22 and Luke 4:32)

When Jesus had finished saying these things,
the crowds were astounded at his teaching,
for he taught them as one having authority,
and not as their scribes.

‘They were astounded at his teaching,
for he taught them as one having authority,
and not as the scribes.’ (Mark 1:22)