

Living with Kingdom Priorities

Introduction: A Call to Authentic Righteousness

In Matthew 6, Jesus continues His Sermon on the Mount, shifting focus from our character (as seen in Matthew 5) to the motivation behind our actions. He warns against performing righteous deeds for the sake of human recognition and challenges us to develop a heart that seeks God's approval above all else. In this chapter, Jesus addresses three key areas of spiritual practice—giving, prayer, and fasting—and then provides a powerful teaching on trusting God over material concerns.

This passage calls us to examine our hearts and priorities. Are we seeking God's kingdom first, or are we more concerned with human praise, financial security, and daily worries? Let's explore Jesus' words with an attitude of self-reflection and a desire to align our lives with His kingdom principles.

I. The Danger of Seeking Human Approval (Matthew 6:1-18)

A. Giving with the Right Motive (6:1-4)

Jesus warns:

"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven." (Matthew 6:1, NKJV)

Key Insight:

Giving is meant to be an act of worship, not performance. If we give to impress others, we have already received our earthly reward—public recognition—but we forfeit God's eternal reward.

Personal Application:

- Do I give generously and privately, or do I seek credit for my generosity?
- Am I more concerned about God's approval or others' opinions?
- When I give, do I do so joyfully, trusting God as my provider?

Jesus encourages secret giving—not to hide it from accountability but to keep our motives pure. God sees what is done in secret and rewards accordingly.

B. Praying with Sincerity (6:5-15)

Jesus teaches:

"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward." (Matthew 6:5, NKJV)

Prayer is meant to be a conversation with God, not a public spectacle. The Pharisees prayed for show, but Jesus calls us to pray for relationship.

Personal Application:

- Do I pray to connect with God, or do I pray to impress others?
- Do I have a secret place of prayer where I meet with God regularly?
- Is my prayer life genuine and heartfelt, or just routine?

The Model Prayer: The Lord's Prayer (6:9-13)

Jesus provides a model prayer, covering:

1. Relationship – "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name."
2. Submission – "Your kingdom come. Your will be done."
3. Dependence – "Give us this day our daily bread."
4. Forgiveness – "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."
5. Guidance – "Lead us not into temptation."
6. Deliverance – "Deliver us from the evil one."

Reflection:

- Does my prayer reflect a desire for God's will above my own?
- Am I willing to forgive others as I seek God's forgiveness?

C. Fasting with the Right Attitude (6:16-18)

Jesus warns:

"When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting." (Matthew 6:16, NKJV)

Fasting is a personal discipline to draw closer to God, not a way to appear spiritual before others. If we fast for public praise, that praise is our only reward.

Personal Application:

- Do I fast with a heart focused on God, or to impress others?
- Am I willing to fast in secret, trusting that God sees and rewards?

II. Trusting God Over Material Concerns (Matthew 6:19-34)

A. Where Is Your Treasure? (6:19-21)

Jesus instructs:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matthew 6:19-20, NKJV)

Earthly treasures are temporary, but heavenly treasures are eternal. What we invest in reveals where our heart truly is.

Personal Application:

- Am I more focused on earthly success or heavenly rewards?
- How do I use my time, talents, and resources for God's kingdom?

B. A Divided Heart Leads to Darkness (6:22-24)

"No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24, NKJV)

A divided heart leads to spiritual blindness. If our focus is on material wealth, we will struggle to truly follow God.

Personal Application:

- What competes for my devotion—God or money?
- Do I trust God as my provider, or am I controlled by financial anxiety?

C. The Cure for Worry: Seek First the Kingdom (6:25-34)

Jesus gives a powerful reason not to worry:

"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26, NKJV)

Worry accomplishes nothing—it only robs us of peace. Instead of obsessing over money, food, and clothing, we are called to seek God's kingdom first.

Key Truths About Worry:

- Worry doesn't change anything (6:27).
- God knows what we need (6:32).
- Seeking God's kingdom leads to provision (6:33).

Personal Application:

- What am I worrying about that I need to surrender to God?
- How can I practically seek God's kingdom in my daily life?

Jesus closes with this powerful command:

"Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things." (Matthew 6:34, NKJV)

Instead of stressing over the future, we must learn to trust God daily.

Conclusion: Living Out Kingdom Priorities

Matthew 6 calls us to examine our motives, priorities, and faith. Jesus challenges us to:

1. Give, pray, and fast with sincerity.
2. Lay up treasures in heaven, not on earth.
3. Trust God instead of worrying about material needs.

Reflection Questions:

- Am I living for God's approval or man's applause?
- Do I trust God with my daily needs, or do I live in anxiety?
- Is my heart set on heaven, or am I distracted by earthly concerns?

Prayer

Father, help me to seek Your kingdom first. Purify my motives, deepen my faith, and free me from worry. I want to live for You alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.