



Exploring the Kingdom of God in Matthew:
Proper Motives for Alms and Prayer
Jan 7, 2018

A PRECIOUS PATH FORWARD

It's two-fold:

1. Repent
2. Renew our commitment to our Scripture...to God's pattern of loving Him and each other.

We need to, as a church, bow our heads, lift our hands, and cry out to God for forgiveness. We need to ask Him to remove any places of rebellion and stubbornness in us.

Secondly, we need to renew our devotion to the commands of God and reprioritize our families and His Church in our daily living.

- **I believe a season of blessing can break over our church!**
- **I believe a time of truly pouring into and releasing people from bondage is our call!**
- **I believe God wants to use us to be a light in the midst of much darkness!**
- **I believe if we refuse to be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus and all He has taught us, God will usher us into increased love, devotion, and effectiveness!**

What would happen if we all truly embraced what God is doing in our church and began to live it out? What if we truly got on the same page and started walking in humble, loving, unity?

What if we began actively discipling others? What if we started unashamedly bringing people into the life of our local church and helping them learn and apply God's Word? What if we began having consistent times of prayer and Great Commission-based hospitality?

This is our road in 2018: Building. Building our tenderness and humility before God, committing ourselves to building people...or making disciples. Building up CRCC by following the pattern of Scripture in love and grace.

TEXT: MATTHEW 6:1-8

What an appropriate message for the first day of Consecration!

- As a reminder, this Holy Gospel was likely written by Matthew (or Levi), one of the Twelve (Matt 9:9-13).
- Matthew's mandate was to demonstrate the *Messiahship of Jesus*.
- Another purpose of this Gospel is to expound upon the Kingdom-nature of Jesus' ministry (he mentions *Kingdom* in over 50 verses) and emphasizes what the Kingdom of God looks like.

- Remember, a Kingdom has a King!

"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Rev 17:14

- We emphasize this point because of the current bias, even in the church, against authority. No one likes to be told what to do. Nevertheless, we state unequivocally that Christ rules! He is Lord and Lord of all! This is the nature of Kingdom; it has a King and He reigns!
- Also remember that the Kingdom of Christ, by its very nature, is in continual conflict with the Kingdom of Satan (darkness).
- Finally, recall that **Jesus' Kingdom also has a "right now but not yet" quality to it**. The Kingdom is coming, but the Kingdom is also NOW because the Church is in (but not of) the world.
- The Sermon on the Mount has been called "The Magna Carta of the Kingdom" and "The Manifesto of the King." In sum, it is the constitution of the Christian's life, desire, and character.
- Bishop JC Ryle said:

"Would we know what kind of people Christians ought to be? Would we know the character at which Christians ought to aim? Would we know the outward walk and inward habit of mind which become a follower of Christ? Then let us often study the Sermon on the Mount. Let us often ponder each sentence, and prove ourselves by it.

- As we've been saying, in the Sermon the Mount, our LORD gets to "the heart of the matter." Today's Text is no different...

THE PROPER MOTIVES FOR ALMS AND PRAYER:

Mat 6:1 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.

- A couple of obvious but important thoughts here.
- First, notice the phrase (in KJV) "Take heed" ("Beware" in ESV). The word here in Greek is *prosechō*, which means "to hold the mind, pay attention to, or adhere to."
- Often this sort of "warning" connotation can be lost with a cursory reading. However, we find this word used again in other places, and in what we might consider much more serious situations...

Mat 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Mat 10:17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

Act 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

1Ti 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Heb 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

2Pe 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

- So the LORD must really want us to “take heed.” But why?
- I believe the LORD does not want us to purposely attempt to make ourselves appear righteous before others. This would demonstrate **hypocrisy** (because we are presenting something that is not really true) and obvious **pride**.
- William MacDonald calls this “parading our piety.” The goal would be to sinfully reap a temporary “reward” by receiving the applause and adulation of men. The transgression here is not the doing of good, but the pride of life...the desire to be seen by others.

Mat 6:2 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.

- In contrast to such hypocrisy (wanting to be seen), in the Kingdom the doing of alms must be done **humbly**, and free of the desire to make oneself known.
- Alms literally means “active compassion or love, as in charity.” The root is a word that means compassionate.

Mat 6:3-4 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.

- Note the Lord says “when thou doest.” There is an assumption that those in the Kingdom WILL be doers of charitable deeds! Indeed, we’ve been saved for such...

Eph 2:8-10 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Tit 2:11-14 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

- Verse 4 of our text requires a clarification. You have not sinned if someone finds out you gave something to someone. But if you go out of your way to make that known, there is a problem!

- Again, the issue is the **heart!** Recall our LORD said in the previous chapter:

Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

- Indeed, if our hearts are right before God (humble, meek, contrite, aware of our depravity and great need), our lights will shine brightly! God actually wants these sorts of hearts (and their subsequent works) to be seen!

Mat 6:5 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.

- This same divine desire for right hearts also applies to prayer.
- In verse 5, an important contrast is made between the prayers of the hypocrite and the prayers of the humble: **Hypocrites pray to be seen of men; the humble pray to be heard of God.** Understanding the difference is so important.
- Again, the issue is motive. What is one trying to accomplish by praying...the praise of men or the **Presence** of God?
- May we always seek Him and His righteousness! May we never succumb to the lure of worldly honor! May pleasing our LORD be our first priority! May we do good deeds, pray, and indeed live with this Pauline mindset:

Gal 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Mat 6:6 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.

- So our LORD gives us some practical instruction to avoid such hypocrisy.
- Basically, to avoid seeking honor from men, “Go into your room and shut the door.” Do you have a prayer closet? :)
- Now, is our LORD saying that all prayer has to be private? Certainly not! The pattern for corporate prayer is clear throughout The Acts of the Apostles, and instructions are given for corporate prayer in Scripture, 1 Timothy 2 being an example.
- However, even in corporate prayer the principles of humility, meekness, and shamefaced **transparency** apply. The goal is for God to hear and be honored!

Mat 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

- So then much talking in prayer does us no good if our hearts are lifted up in pride!
- *Mat 6:7 “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. (NLT)*
- Some believers struggle with prayer because they think they have to pray like someone else. Friend, prayer is simply communing with God. It is approaching God in meekness and repentance and allowing Him to speak, correct, heal, and transform you.
- God is not impressed by your intellect in prayer, but rather your submissiveness and **deference**.

Mat 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

- So the last thing we should want is to lose out on the blessing of prayer by imitating the world. Do not be like unto them!
- Rather, we should approach our LORD with reverence, knowing that He is sovereign and is fully aware of every need and the total state of our hearts.
- The writer of Hebrews says it better than I ever could:

Heb 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Amen!

APPLICATIONS FOR EDIFICATION (BUILDING UP) AND ENCOURAGEMENT
(ROM 14:19; EPH 4:9; 1 THES 5:11; JUDE 1:20)

1. As we enter a time of consecration, commit to rising a few minutes earlier and communing with God in prayer.
2. Reflect on (and maybe review) some of our sermons from Matthew 5. Can you see clearly our LORD’s desire for purity of heart in His people? If so, what are you doing to allow Him to shift the “state of your heart?”
3. Examine your life for “alms” or acts of charity and good works. What adjustments might you make this year to better serve the hurting and broken around you?
4. Call a few folks in our church this week with a word of encouragement. Be a blessing!
5. Set some godly goals in areas of your life. For example, what if we all set a goal to bring one person/family into the life of our church this year?