

Day 29 – Matt 6:16-18

The next topic Jesus introduces to His audience is fasting. His first sentence on this subject is very similar to how He spoke on the matter of prayer: “...**when you fast...**”. This phrase is repeated twice in the three verses in which He deals with the concept of fasting. The Lord is stressing to us the importance of the subject matter He is teaching. For most of us the thought of fasting is just that: a thought. Yet the phrase “**But you, when you fast,**” makes it very evident that He was not only referring to His disciples that were in attendance at that time but also to us, His disciples today. We are quick to receive and believe that His words on prayer (look back at Matt. 6:5-7) were meant for us, but this idea of fasting is one that is greatly neglected in the body of Christ today. Consider the words of our Lord in Luke 5:33-35 ... we are now living in the “*days*” He was referring to at the end of verse 35.

The Pharisees fasted often but it wasn't pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

Question: Why was the Lord not pleased with the Pharisees when they fasted?

Answer: Turn to Isaiah 58 and read the first 5 verses, then read Matthew 6:16 & 17 again. The Lord was not impressed with their outward expressions because of the motive of their hearts.

Daily Journal

Turn back to Isaiah and read the remainder of chapter 58, verses 6 through 14. His Word declares the purpose of a fast that **is** pleasing to Him. Considering what Jesus taught and the words of Isaiah the prophet, we need to challenge ourselves to fast in a way that is satisfying to our Master. Have you ever fasted? If not take time this week to pray to the Lord and ask Him for direction concerning a fast. Write down what you believe He has spoken to you:

Day 30 – Matt 6:19-21

Looking around at some of the newer housing developments it would seem there is a growing number of people who are just not content with the average-sized home anymore. Phrases such as “*bigger is better*”, “*gotta keep up with the Jones*”, and “*the more the merrier*” seem to be the trend. Yet deep down in the hearts of most of these people there is a yearning for something that money just can't buy. They strive to climb the corporate ladder, buy the latest and greatest toys for themselves, and heap up goods here on the earth, but it just doesn't fill the emptiness within their hearts. No matter how well things are built these days they will not last forever, nor can we take them with us when we depart from this earth and step into eternity. Jesus tells us in verse 20 that we are to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven that are eternal. What He is speaking about here are treasures that are pleasing to our heavenly Father. There is nothing more satisfying to Him than watching His children become more like Him with each passing day. The main lesson and purpose of the teachings throughout God's Word is to instruct and empower us to develop God-like character. Read Rom. 5:1-5, Gal. 5: 22-23 & 2 Pt. 1:5-11, for a few of many examples.

Reflection: As we walk through the teachings of Jesus as recorded by Matthew (Matt. Chapter 5-7) it is abundantly evident that His main emphasis is upon the condition of our hearts; “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” The more we delight ourselves in Him, and His Word, the more time we will spend with Him. As we spend more quality time with Him, the more we become like Him. The more we become like Him, the more evident the fruit of His Spirit will be in our lives. This is the true measure of the treasures that are being stored up in heaven for His glory.

Daily Journal

Read John 15:1-8 and evaluate the fruitfulness of your own life. None of us have reached the standards Jesus has set and the Lord is well aware of that. The point is, we need to be increasing in the fruit of the Spirit, and showing evidence of that in our lives to those around us, especially to those in our own family. Write down your progress as we continue our journey through the Sermon on the Mount:

Day 31 – Matt 6:22-23

In these next two verses Jesus likens the eye of the body to that of a lamp: **“The lamp of the body is the eye.”** He goes on to compare a good lamp (one full of light) to that of a bad lamp (one full of darkness). When we consider Jesus' analogy of a lamp to that of the human eye we need to ask ourselves what determines the intensity of light the lamp, or the body, gives off. A natural lamp in Jesus' day was powered by olive oil; the more pure the oil was, the brighter the lamp would burn. Tying into this, it is interesting to note that the place where Jesus went to pray with his disciples (the Garden of Gethsemane) was actually near the foot of the Mount of Olives. The very garden Jesus prayed in and said these famous words: **“...not as I will, but as You will.”** (read Matt. 26:36-46) was full of olives. Extracting oil from the olive required intense pressure, the more pressure applied during the process the greater the separation of the flesh and the oil becomes. The oil would then be poured into the heart of the lamp; the lamp would be lit and left on a stand. There is a lot of strong imagery and analogy invoked in this teaching that our Lord shares with us. Pause for a moment and think on this.

Reflection: Looking back at Matthew 6:14-16 Jesus made this statement: **“You** (that's you and I) **are the light of the world”**. If we are to let our light shine before men then that light needs to be from Him not us, as we are simply vessels. It is our task to give a place in our hearts to Him, His word and His Spirit, as He deserves. Unfortunately, the process of being refined to allow His light to shine through us is one that is not popular to many believers (read Heb. 12:3-11).

Daily Journal

As you read through the passage in Hebrews, also read James 1: 1-4, and write down your thoughts on what is being communicated. Ask yourself, how do I handle challenging situations?

Day 32 – Matt 6:24-34

Jesus' bold statement in verse 24 connects what He taught in Matt. 6:19-23 (look back at day 30 & 31) and what is recorded by Matthew 6: 25-34. The reality is that if we can't give away something that we possess, then **we** don't truly possess **it, it possesses us** (read Lk. 12:27-34). Money is simply a tool that we cannot allow to rule us, instead we must be masters over it so that our hearts can truly be God's and God's alone. (read 1 Tim. 6:6) The Lord instructs us in verses 25 to 32 not to worry about outward things, such as what we will eat or what we will wear, for He knows we have need of these things (read the end of verse 32). With a rocky global economy and volatile markets all around the world, there is more for us to worry about in this generation on the financial front than ever before. Yet even in the midst of all that is happening in our world, Jesus gives us the key to living a life free from worry. He makes it sound so simple but in reality, so few truly enjoy a stress free life. His answer to living this worry- free life is found in verse 33-34:

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Reflection: Consider the last part of verse 34: *“Sufficient for the day is its own trouble”*. God never promised us that we would not have trouble in this life, in fact His word promises us the exact opposite. Consider the apostle Paul's life and all he went through to do the will of the Lord. Read Acts 14:21-22.

Daily Journal

Read 2 Tim. 3:1-7,12; 1 Thess. 3:1-4, and then look at the words of our Lord concerning the days we are living in now, Matt. 24:4-13. We need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. That is why the Word tells us to put on the whole armour of God, read Eph. 6:10-18, to withstand in this day. Ask the Lord how you can put on the full armour He has provided for us:

Day 34 – Matt 7:7-12

Most of us are very familiar with the first two verses in this particular portion of the Lords' teachings, and have probably heard a lot of insightful preaching on asking, seeking, and knocking. When we look at the words of Jesus here and consider all that He has taught us up to this point--especially as we put them into practice--we begin to see things from a different perspective. The Lord's main focus has been the importance of the condition of our hearts, (see Matt. 5:3,6 & 8) The next 3 verses give us a better understanding of just how good God is. Not only does He care about our hearts but also about our earthly concerns and needs, so that when we ask Him for what we understand to be in His will, including things we need, He will answer us, just as He promised (read Jn 14:13-14). Jesus uses 2 different illustrations to emphasize how much better God is than an earthly father, even one with an evil heart in the eyes of God who none the less gives good gifts to his children. He says, *"how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"* (read Eph. 1:3 & Jms. 1:17). Turn to the gospel of John and read the words of the Lord in 15:7, next read it in the context of 15:1-14, and then read Ps.37:1-8 and focus on verse 4.

Reflection: God is Good and He never changes (read James. 1:17 & Heb. 13:8). His word is "yes and amen" (read 2 Cor. 1:18-22), and He doesn't show favouritism (Rom. 2:11, Gal. 2:6 & Jas. 2:1-9). If we, His children, consistently delight ourselves in the Lord and walk in obedience to His will, we will see the hand of God move mightily (read Daniel 11:32).

Daily Journal

There is a divine connection throughout the entire word of God between the obedience of His people and the results of their prayers. Not one time in the book of Acts do we read that someone with a pure heart who was seeking God's will prayed and their prayers were not answered. Write down your thoughts to the Lord in response to today's devotional:

Day 35 – Matt 7:13-14

There are good people in the world today that are willing to help strangers in desperate situations. For instance: how many of us remember the Newfoundland town of Gander which played host to thousands of stranded airline passengers when American airspace was closed after the 9/11 terrorist attacks? Unfortunately, all of our good deeds have no eternal value without first knowing Jesus Christ as Lord. There are many who proclaim to believe in Jesus while having never had a “born again” experience (read Jn. 3:1-8). The word of God tells us that even the demons believe (Jas. 2:19), and yet we know their destiny is the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). Jesus' bold words here declare that the majority of people who say they believe in Jesus Christ will not find themselves on the right side of eternity. The word *many* in verse 13 is the Greek word *polus* and is better translated as “*most or majority*”. In Jesus' second statement (read verse 14) He declares that “*narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life*”. The Amplified version helps bring greater clarity to the word *narrow* by adding the words “*contracted by pressure*”. Another word of interest in this verse is *difficult* which can be defined as “*confined, compressed or restricted*”. Finally the last word we need to look at in this verse is *few* which literally means *minority*. All in all, the picture painted by these words in the Greek language is that of a bottle neck; think of a crowded five lane highway that tapers down to just one lane.

Reflection: The late (and great) William Booth who was the founder of the Salvation Army made this statement: “*The chief danger of the 20th century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell.*” We as the children of God need to rise above the luke-warmness that has been sweeping through the church in these last days (read 2 Timothy 3:1-7 & 4:1-5).

Daily Journal

Turn to the book of Revelations and read Jesus' rebuke to the last of the seven churches He addresses (Rev. 3:14-22). Many theologians believe that these seven churches represent the state of God's people throughout the last 2,000 years leading up to the rapture of the church. Interestingly enough we are living in the last days and thus would be represented by the church of the Laodiceans. How can we keep from becoming lukewarm? Write down your thoughts:
