

Matthew 6: 1-18

A couple of weeks ago I spoke to the church from Matthew 5. We spoke about turning the other cheek; going the extra mile, giving your cloak to someone who is trying to sue you. We found that it is important as Christians to live our lives lightly. Learning to stay connected to people through life; Pay any debts we owe and help whenever we can.

When we live life lightly and confront those things that need confronting we in effect stop the 'little foxes spoiling the vine'. It is often the little things that weigh us down so much that we lose the capacity to carry the larger things God wants us to carry so that we can grow in our influence.

AS we move further into the sermon on the mount we come across a section of scripture in Matthew 6:1-18. In it we see a little more of the picture of how to live life lightly.

Living life lightly is understanding and thinking correctly about your connection with God.

Let's have a look at each of these ideas.

1. Charitable deeds – those things that we should be doing.

The Bottom Line: Don't do good works to get attention.

The kingdom of God is about laying down your life for another. That was the example Jesus laid for us. We lay down our lives, our feelings out thoughts so that others can get a connection with God.

The kingdom of God is not a place for self promotion. It's the place of God promotion.

It is God who opens doors and shuts doors. He makes a way where there is no way. He rewards people. What we sow is what we reap.

This scripture is not about doing nothing its about the motive of heart attached to our doing.

This is not about being noble, its about doing something because it is the right thing to do.

2. Prayer – well more importantly, public prayer

The Bottom line: You don't talk with God to get approval, you talk with God because you already have approval

Jesus wasn't saying to stop praying publicly and only to pray in private, he was saying if you are only praying publicly to get attention then learn to pray privately.

Some people were praying to get attention. **We don't need to get God's attention, we already have it!**

- God did not send his son because someone got His attention. He sent his son because he wanted to get ours.
- God did not send His son because someone got His approval. God sent his son to give someone approval.

What happens when we get the focus wrong? We think we are trying to get God's attention or approval.

People become Sunday prayers. Not right. People are only Sunday Christians. Not right. God wants us to live life the same. **Sunday is just a communal expression of what has already been in your heart during the week.**

When was the last time you read the bible outside of church? When was the last time you spent more than 15 minutes praying for the church or its people, not your own problems.

Your prayer life should reflect your relationship with God.

The secret place here is not just a quiet place where no one else can be, its your place of connection with God. You need to find out how you connect with God and do it regularly so that when you come on a Sunday or a Friday you are ready to serve. Too many Christians come to church not ready to serve because they haven't done anything to get themselves ready.

The Lord's prayer –

In the original Greek they were statements of fact not 'phrases of hope or questions'

Oh God I hope you are in heaven.
Oh God I hope you give me my daily bread
Oh God I hope you forgive me my debts
Oh God I hope you don't lead me into temptation

Oh God who I think is in a place called heaven.
Oh God please give me my daily bread
Oh God will you please forgive me my debts
Oh God please dont lead me into temptation

No they are Statements of Fact.

God you are in heaven
God your will, will be done
God you give us our daily bread
God you forgive us our debts
God you do not lead us into temptation
God you deliver us from the evil one.
And all of this shows me that 'yours is the kingdom the power and the glory'.

We don't pray to get god's attention/approval we pray because we already have it.

That's why we don't just blindly repeat things.

3. Fasting

The Bottom line: We are not to replace our walk with God through something else no matter how noble it is.

- Fasting when we stop doing something for a season.
- When let go of one thing so that we can grab onto another.

Fasting is a very noble thing to do. Going without something for a season. Wow. Seems kind of crazy but its good for us.

We have all been told to stop eating, drinking certain things for a season to help our body.

In church life when people fast they often complain, mope, groan, tell everyone they are doing it. Oh how noble is that!

This scripture is not just about fasting. Its about anything that we use to replace God. Its about using anything to replace what God has done.

What noble things can we use to replace God or what he has done?

1. Forbidding to do something like swearing or drinking or sleeping around.
2. Trying to stop lying
3. Anything we do to try and impress God is useless.

None of those actions get you any closer to God. Stop being so noble and pious about all this. They may be wrong, and we know that but stopping them doesn't get you any closer than helping an old lady to cross a street.

People like to put on a pretence in reference to looking holy, righteous. People think that if I stop doing something I will be more holy. If I just stop swearing, or thinking wrong thoughts I will be more righteous. I

might even get more of the favour of God on my world because I am giving up something.

These things give us the semblance of looking right. Just like the Pharisees.

Jesus doesn't want us to just look righteous, sound righteous or act righteous. He is saying Be righteous. Be holy.

Be holy for I am holy.

How can we be holy? How can we be righteous? Is it a doing? Do we need to change something pastor Jude?. What can I change so that I can be holy, righteous?

The answer is simple. Receive it.

Be holy for I am holy. This is not 'be holy' in other words act holy, do things to show you are holy... it is about the 'state' of being holy.

God is not holy because he does good things. He does good things because his character is Holy.

Romans 5:17 says you have received the gift of righteousness.

In other words once you have received the gift stop trying to get the gift. Just be. Know who you are in Christ. Know what God has done for you. And when you are feeling condemned because you have failed, run to God in your secret place and let his mercy and grace flow over your soul, cleansing your mind. Set your mind on things above, not on things that make you feel bad. See yourself through the eyes of God.

- Charitable deeds – don't do them to get attention
- Prayer – don't do it to get approval
- Fasting – don't do it to look noble

God wants us to pray, fast and even do charitable deeds. We don't do them to get something, we do them because we already have something.

Today, you may not know God. You may not know the God I am talking about today. You might feel like, man this is so different. Well today you can meet that God who loved you so much that he sent his son to pay the price for your life. Not so you would live in condemnation but to bring you closer to Him to live a life worth living.

I want to ask you a question...