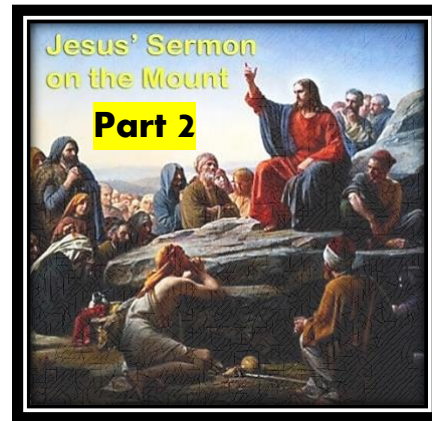




Matthew six

HPC Trinity Class

January 7, 2024



Question from last session:

“Sermon on the Mount” in Greek = “*ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους ομιλία*,”
literally “on His terms speech.”
κήρυγμα (kirigma) = sermon

Jesus now addresses the crowd, spelling out three common Jewish practices of devotion to God: giving to the needy, praying, and fasting. “His point is to warn against calling attention to one’s good behavior for the sake of earning human praise.”¹

RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY when giving to the needy. [READ 6:1-4]

We do find some justification in the belief of Jesus’ day that almsgiving earned merit with God. However, those few justifying verses are tucked into corners of the Apocryphal books of Tobit (12:8-9) and Ecclesiasticus (3:30; 29:11-12), and Jesus himself rebukes this hypocrisy.



Jesus simply *assumes* that his followers will give alms (6:2). Yet the practice of ostentatiously giving to the poor must have been widely practiced: frequent warnings from contemporary Jewish writers makes this clear.²

[READ 6:5-6]

PRAYER was an important part of Jewish life. It was common to pray at any occasion, not just during formal worship: in the street, at home, with friends or foes. Jesus said that “the hypocrites pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners,” but only so that they may show off.

One did not have to be standing when praying. Sitting, standing, kneeling, and prostrate are all positions of prayer in both the OT and NT. The point here is that those who are hypocrites pray simply to be seen---thus, “they love to pray standing.”

¹ Zondervan, comments on MT 6:1-18, pg. 1940.

² Expositor’s, pg. 163.

[READ 6:7-8]

A BABBLING PRAYER does not impress God. He is not looking at your word count or your flowery language. Pagans use these tactics, thinking that it plays better with their gods. Jesus' followers know differently.

- A prayer may be only a few words or it may be very lengthy. Jesus was not criticizing those who gave long prayers.—he himself was known to pray all night. Empty words and vain repetition are to be avoided, though.
- Ancient pagan prayers were often rote and were repeated over and over.³ Some churches even today require that a penitent sinner recite a certain prayer a specific number of times, which is a throwback to pagan cultic practices.
 - “Do not keep on babbling” (NIV);
 - “Use not vain repetitions” (KJV);
 - “Do not heap up empty phrases” (ESV);
 - “Do not use meaningless repetition” (NASB);
 - “Don’t talk on and on as people do who don’t know God” (Contemporary English Version).

Do you think some people use the Lord’s Prayer—mumbling it from rote-- as a tool to let God “see” how faithful they are?

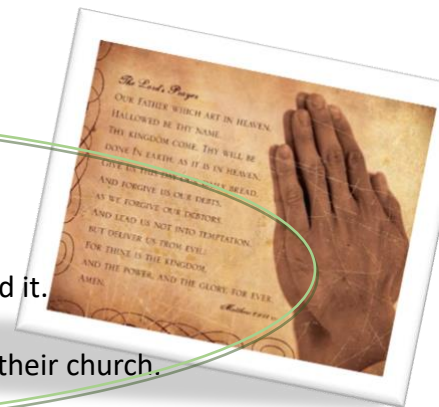
THE LORD’S PRAYER, 6:9b-13. This prayer is a model, given to us by Christ himself, and has always played an important part in our faith. Tertullian called it the ‘epitome of the whole Gospel,’ and Augustine believed it to be the source of all other prayers.⁴ The Didache also contains a version of this prayer which is very similar to Matthew’s.

- Our first focus should be on God (vs. 9-10); people are second (vs. 11-13)

Why do you think Matthew’s version differs from Luke’s (LK 11:2-4)?

No good answer. Here’s some ideas from Bible scholars:

1. Luke copied Matthew’s version but simplified it.
2. Luke’s version is the original, and Matthew copied and enlarged it.
3. Luke and Matthew used two separate sources.
4. Each evangelist recorded the form which was most familiar to their church.



Remember that to most of his contemporary society, Jesus appeared to be just another travelling Jewish preacher/teacher. For about three years he roamed the roads and villages declaring the same message wherever he went. His audiences were quite varied-- peasants, herdsmen, traders, government officials,

³ Pagans “used long lists of the names of their gods in their prayers, hoping that by constantly repeating them they would call on the name of the god that could help them.” (Zondervan, fn. to 6:7, pg. 1940)

⁴ Oxford, “Lord’s Prayer,” pg. 836.

wealthy merchants, young & old, etc. Matthew's version, however, was intended for a Jewish audience and had an eschatological tone. We see this reflected in the religious tradition of rural Galilee. Luke, who may have written his work some years after Matthew, is focused on his Greek-speaking readers. His book reflects a more liturgical slant which would appeal to an audience from the Jerusalem crowd, and which dealt more on events of daily life.⁵

• **MATTHEW 6:9-13**

- “Our Father in heaven
- Hallowed be your name.
- Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven
- Give us this day our daily bread.
- And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven
our debtors
- And do not bring us to the time
of trial
- but rescue us from the evil one.”

• **LUKE 11:2-4**

- “Father,
- Hallowed be your name.
- Your kingdom come.
- Give us each day our daily
bread.
- And forgive us our sins
for we ourselves forgive
everyone indebted to us
- And do not bring us to the time
of trial.”

- Notice that Jesus is teaching *how* one should pray, not *what* to pray. It was to be used as a model for the disciples' prayer lives, not as a strict liturgical form.
- v. 9---“Father.” We seldom find this pronoun used for God in the OT, and even then it is most often used as an analogy: “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him....” (Ps. 103:13).
 - The phrase “Abba, Father” is not found in MT. The only Gospel writer to use “Abba” is Mark,⁶ as Jesus was carrying his cross.
 - “who art in heaven” reflects the Jewish belief of a heavenly home for God. This phrase is absent in Luke's version, which he directed to a non-Jewish audience.
 - “hallowed” = sacred, holy vs. something common (*koines*).



⁵ Expositor's, pg. 167.

⁶ MK 14:36. Paul also uses “Abba” in Romans and Galatians. “In the most primitive form of the Prayer, God is simply addressed as Father, which in Aramaic is /abba/. Despite common mythology, /abba/ does not mean “daddy,” and was used by children and adults alike.” (Caruso)



We have this prayer to reprint it in the church bulletin each week?
(There are two major reasons.)

- vs. 11-13---We are to pray for our three basic needs, not our greeds: for food, forgiveness, and the will to resist evil.
 1. Food (v. 11): the early church thought that it was inappropriate for people to ask for actual food. This was due to early mistranslations from the Latin.
 2. Forgiveness (v.12): **Some Bibles say “debts,” some say “sins.” Which is it?** The language of Jesus time and place was Aramaic; it was Jesus’ everyday language. “In nearly every Aramaic dialect contemporary to Jesus, the most common word for ‘sin’ was synonymous with the word for ‘debt’ which is /hob/. When inflected and declined as /haib/ it then takes on the meaning of “one who is in debt” or “one who sins.” (Caruso)
 3. Temptation (v. 13): Think about it!! “If a person continues to place himself in a situation where he knows he will be tempted to sin, it becomes increasingly likely that he will commit that sin.”⁷ Remember, though, the actual enticement to sin is never generated by God.

[READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13]

v. 13---**Q:** **Is it “evil one” or simply “evil?”**

A: Either. “Evil one” is the devil, and “evil” is the result of the devil’s work. In Greek both of these can be masculine or neuter. In other words, whenever evil raises its head we pray that God will protect us spiritually.

- The Jewish Prayer Book, the Siddur, has a similar thought: “Lead us not into sin or...temptation...; let not the evil inclination have sway over us.”⁸



⁷ Key Word, commentary on LK 11:4, pg. 1214.

⁸ Interpreter’s, “Lord’s Prayer,” pg. 157.

Q: Where's the last part: "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, Amen"??

A: This doxology was a later addition and was not part of Matthew's original book. Today Protestant churches usually conclude the prayer with this doxology, however. The ancient church may have also used it as a triumphant ending.



v. 14 emphasizes the forgiveness of v. 12.

FASTING [READ MATTHEW 6:16-18]

Mosaic law originally required that fasting be done only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29-31). Later, when the Jewish nation was in the Exile regular fasts and calls to confession were instituted as a show of remembrance.

However, it wasn't long until fasting became viewed as simply another religious formality. This growing hypocrisy is noted in the books of Isaiah, Jerimiah, and Zechariah.

[READ ISAIAH 58: 3-4; 6-8].

Jesus did not ban fasts; far from it—he assumed that his followers would continue to fast, though doing it for the right reason...not to strive for human praise.

(FYI--A couple of hundred years after Jesus, Bishop Alexander declared that habitual temperance was more effective than occasional abstinence. Despite this, the church continued its Wednesday and Friday fasts.)

TREASURERS IN HEAVEN

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."—6:21.

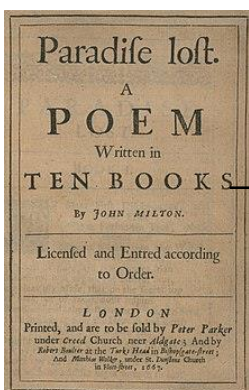
In today's world as well as Jesus' we find that "materialism may be God's greatest rival competing for allegiance of human hearts."⁹

[READ MATTHEW 6:24]

v. 24---The Greek word for "serve" means to serve as a slave. Some Bibles say "Money" (often with a capital M), others say "mammon". The word "mammon" is a medieval translation of the Greek "*mamōna*," meaning material items that have become idols. It always has an evil context in the Bible.

Why would the "M" be capitalized in some versions?

→ In his 1667 poem *Paradise Lost* (book 1, #678) John Milton describes Mammon being among the fallen angels.



⁹ Zondervan fn., pg. 1941

DO NOT WORRY (v. 25) doesn't mean do not plan for the future; rather, do not be anxious about it. God knows our needs and will provide. Jesus drives this point home twice:

Even the birds and flowers receive God's grace. "Are you not much more valuable than they?" (v. 27).

[READ MATTHEW 6:33-34].

Therefore, as Christians we are to live our life differently than those who don't know God's fatherly love. Those people have no fundamental goals beyond material things.

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