

Series: Being with Jesus, a study in spiritual disciplines

Sermon: Fasting and Simplicity

Primary texts: On fasting - [Matthew 6:16-18](#); [Matthew 9:15](#). On simplicity – [Ecclesiastes 7:30](#); [Matthew 6:25-33](#); [Leviticus 25:23](#); [Proverbs 11:28](#); [Matthew 6:21, 19](#)

Discussion guide:

- What are the first thoughts that come to mind when someone mentions the practice of fasting?
 - How do you define it?
 - What imagery have you attached to it?
 - What assumptions do hold about fasting and those who practice it?
- Read Matthew 6:16-18
 - What is significant about Jesus starting this statement with “when” instead of “if”?
 - What does Jesus mean when he states “they have received their reward?”
 - Look at the topics of the sections of the Sermon on the Mount that surround these verses. What can we discern considering the context?
- Read Matthew 9:15
 - What does this explain about why the disciples did not fast?
 - Given this explanation, who / when are those who should be fasting?
- Reflect on this quote about simplicity from Jan Johnson, “Simplicity is not a discipline itself but a *way of being*. It is letting go of things others consider normal.”
 - How does this compare with the message of the world around us?
- Read Ecclesiastes 7:30 “God made man simple; man’s complex problems are of his own devising.” (JB) and Matthew 6:19-24
 - Richard Foster says “we are trapped in a maze of competing attachments.” How do these attachments affect our relationship with Christ? How can we identify what is a “competing attachment” in our life?
 - What are common “masters” that if we are not careful, we can find ourselves serving?
- Read Matthew 6:25-33
 - How can a life of simplicity help with anxiety?
 - What does “seek first the kingdom of God” look like in our society?
 - A common adage is “money can’t buy happiness.” Would a third party observer who looked at the entirety of our life come to the conclusion that we believe that statement based on the decisions we make?
- How are each of the following related to simplicity?:
 - The things we buy
 - The things we “need”
 - Giving things away
 - Our views on “private property”
 - Appreciation and Gratitude
 - Our speech
 - Our pursuit of the kingdom of God
- How are each of these disciplines (fasting and simplicity) essential to and connected with each other?