



## Matthew 6—Commentary Notes\*

---

### A. Introduction

Matthew 5 begins with Jesus's Sermon on the Mount (5:1-12), in which He first taught His disciples the beautiful characteristics that the citizens of the kingdom of heaven must possess. He then went on to call His disciples to be salt and light of the world (5:13-16) and explained the difference between the heart of His standard of righteousness and that of the Pharisees (5:17-48). Now, as we enter Matthew 6, we will continue to observe the difference between Christ's standard and that of the Pharisees in terms of motivation. The main message of ch. 6 is that Christians should practice good and righteous deeds before God while relying on God's provisions for all their needs.<sup>1</sup>

### B. Outline

- I. 6:1-18      The heavenly Father rewards what we do for Him in private.
- II. 6:19-34    The heavenly Father provides for those who wholeheartedly serve Him.

### C. Content

#### I. 6:1-18      The heavenly Father rewards what we do for Him in private.

The Lord Jesus specifically reminded and warned Christians not to turn their God-desired lives of holiness into a "religious show" (the word "hypocrite" carries the meaning of a "stage actor" or "pretender"). Instead, we are to practice it in private. Similarly, the Father who sees what we do in private, will surely reward us. Jesus gave three examples:<sup>2</sup> giving, praying, and fasting.

1. Giving (6:1-4): "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them...your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." 6:1 is an appropriate title or topic sentence for this passage. It addresses the practices of giving, praying, and fasting. Jesus began by discussing giving, specifically, giving to the needy. On the surface, giving seems to be a matter between one person and another, yet it actually concerns God and man. Therefore, good deeds should not be done for others to see, lest the reward comes from man and not from God. The Pharisees wanted others to witness their giving on the streets and in the synagogue as evidence of their righteousness. Yet, the Lord Jesus said that in giving, one ought not to let his left hand know what the right hand did. In other words, giving is to be done in secret or in private. God will surely reward those according to what they have done.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the Lord Jesus instructed us to have pure motives when we give (i.e., not for our own benefit, but as a response to God's love).<sup>4</sup>

In practice, it may sometimes be difficult to keep good deeds hidden from others. The good deeds of those who do it often enough will eventually be found out. The Apostle Paul says, "In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever" (1 Tim 5:25). It is God who reveals. Therefore, we do not need to show off or boast about our good deeds. Furthermore, giving is not only limited to material aid. It can also

---

\* Translator Note: These Commentary Notes were originally compiled in Chinese and translated into English for use by Chinese Christian Fellowship International's (CCF International's) English classes. All sources listed in the table (only listed in English when applicable) at the end of these notes were used and consulted in the original Chinese compilation. Please refer to the table for the references of each numbered annotation. For more information on the sources consulted, please contact CCF International. All biblical references are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV® Copyright © 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

be provision for spiritual needs as well (John 21:15-17). The Lord Jesus's feeding of the five thousand is a perfect example of providing for both the spiritual and physical needs of man (Matt 14:14-21). Apart from these two types of giving, there is also the giving of friendship through intercession, encouragement, and care. These are all closely linked with a life of prayer.

2. Praying: To provide for the spiritual and material needs of others is a practice that is deeply rooted in our prayer lives. Only when we are first fed and blessed by God will we be able to share our resources with others. The Lord Jesus pointed out two common mistakes in praying as reminders for us to avoid and to be alert against:

- 1) Praying to Show Off (6:5-6). The Pharisees at that time demonstrated their self-righteousness by praying in public with the intention for others to see. Thus, it was not God who was receiving their prayers but men.<sup>5</sup> Prayer is an affair between God and man, and the prayers of Christians are for God to hear, not man. Therefore, we do not need to pray in a certain tone or with eloquent phrases for others to perceive us as spiritual. The Lord Jesus does not speak against praying in church or in public. Instead, He teaches concerning our motives. There is often a fine line between an exemplary prayer (coming from a reverent heart, even before men) and putting on a show (using eloquent words so others will see us as spiritual). Prayer must come from a humble and sincere heart. Therefore, we are encouraged to pray in the privacy of our room, with the door closed, where others cannot see, and to pray only to God. "Room" refers to a place hidden from others and away from disturbances. Isaac prayed in the field (Gen 24:63), Peter prayed on the rooftop (Acts 10:9), and the Lord Jesus often went up to the mountainside to pray alone (Mark 6:46). These are examples of praying in "your room."<sup>6</sup>
- 2) Praying with Many Words and Babbling in Prayer (6:7-8). Babbling means repeating empty and meaningless words. A truly humble Christian should know that the prayers of others are equally important. Subsequently, we need to limit the length of public prayers so as to allow others to have a chance to pray as well. It is quite possible that those who like praying long prayers in public, with many repeated words, actually lack personal discipline in prayer. Avoid using jargon. Simply offer direct thanksgiving to God. Make clear requests. Pray for God's promises in Jesus's name and keep prayers short (6:7). Avoid meaningless repetition because God heard us the first time. We would never converse with our friends in this way, so why do we do so with God? Note, however, that the Lord Jesus did not mean for us to never repeat anything in our prayers or to never spend a long time praying. He Himself repeated His prayer concerning His suffering on the cross three times in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Paul prayed about the thorn in his body three times as well (2 Cor 12:8). The Lord Jesus also prayed all night on many occasions (John 17; Luke 6:12). However, none of His prayer was babbling with repeated and meaningless words. They were all sincere, earnest, and loving fellowship with the Father!<sup>7</sup> The important thing is to examine our prayers from the perspective of our motives.

The Lord Jesus knew that we do not know how to pray. Therefore, He provided a model for prayer to teach His disciples how to pray. This prayer is generally referred to as the Lord's Prayer. Though brief, it contains important principles.

6:9-13. There are eight concrete items in the content of this prayer that the Lord Jesus taught. The most important of it being that prayer does not begin by focusing on our own difficulties and needs, but with our worship and commitment to the Father:

- 1) Worship and Commitment.

- a) "Our Father in heaven." God is addressed as "our Father in heaven." The term "Father" is used by the Lord Jesus ten times in 6:1-18. Anyone who is a child of God may call God "Father" in worship.<sup>8</sup> Our heavenly Father is worthy of all worship. No other religion

calls its god “Father,” nor do they have the concept of establishing an intimate and personal relationship with the true God of the universe. In contrast, how precious is it that we can call the great and awesome God our “Abba, Father!”

- b) “Hallowed be your name.” The name of God is holy and is completely apart from sin. We desire that all people on earth know and honor God’s name! We, as children of God, need to live out the holiness of God so that His name may be exalted.
  - c) “Your kingdom come.” “Kingdom” is the realm where God rules. “Your kingdom come” means to care about what God cares about. God desires for His kingdom to be established among men and for His will to be done on earth. Therefore, on the one hand, we pray for God to rule in the church and in the hearts of believers today. On the other hand, we desire the kingdom of God to come earlier rather than later, and for the Lord Jesus to return and reign in His kingdom. The Father God is our Father in heaven and also the King of our lives. We, therefore, offer up ourselves to Him so He can use us in sharing the gospel and in witnessing His name, and so that His kingdom will expand.
  - d) “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” We are willing to commit ourselves before God and to submit completely to His will. People of this world are under the rule of Satan and in opposition to God’s will. Satan is especially delighted when the children of God do not understand the will of God. Therefore, we must remind ourselves not to be conformed to this world, but to test continually what the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God is (Rom 12:2), so that God’s will and plan may be executed in and through us who are obedient just as it is in heaven where He reigns.<sup>9</sup>
- 2) Concerning the Challenges and Needs in Our Personal Lives.
- a) “Give us today our daily bread.” We trust that in His might and loving kindness, God will provide for our daily spiritual and material needs, that is concerning our jobs, families, finances, and personal needs. In this evil age, it is especially important that we bring our needs before our heavenly Father each day and ask for His provision. We should trust Him and be sustained by His grace.
  - b) “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” In this context, “debts” refer to our sins or transgressions against God and man (Luke 11:4; Rom 3:23). The kind of forgiveness we ask for here is not initial forgiveness of sin at the time of salvation and moment of justification by faith. Instead, it is sins we commit in our daily lives that we confess (1 John 1:9).<sup>10</sup> The Lord Jesus teaches us that whenever we ask God for His grace of forgiveness, we ought to learn to forgive those who trespass against us as well. In other words, unless we are first willing to forgive others, we cannot come before God and ask for forgiveness for ourselves. Consider this: the degree of the trespasses against us by any man can never be equal to the degree with which we have sinned against God.
  - c) “Lead us not into temptation.” This part of the verse can also be understood or interpreted as “let us not fall into temptation.” As a human being living in this world, it is inevitable that we will be tempted. We must ask the Lord to empower us so as to avoid or to overcome temptation rather than face it by relying on our own strength.
  - d) “Deliver us from the evil one.” Some translations have it as “deliver us from evil.” The “evil” here speaks of the “evil one,” who is Satan. We ask the Lord to deliver us from the power and bondage of Satan. Such bondage may be external, but it can also be internal bondage of the soul as well. Satan not only tempts us, he also oppresses us with suffering. The Lord Jesus says, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have

overcome the world” (John 16:33). Therefore, when we are surrounded by evil, we can cry out to the Lord Jesus to deliver us from the power of Satan.

- 3) Concluding Prayer with Worship. “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” Some older manuscripts do not include this last line. Nevertheless, its content is beneficial because it acknowledges God’s authority and power. The Lord wants us to see an eternal spiritual truth when we pray, All “kingdom, power, and glory” belong to God. Only when we have such an understanding can we truly pray even in the harshest of circumstances and obtain great peace and hope after praying. For we know on whom we lean and in whom we trust: the Almighty and unshakable God!<sup>11</sup>

The Lord’s prayer is an example that teaches us the principles of prayer. It is not a “prayer chant” for us to simply recite. Some churches may recite this prayer at the conclusion of their gatherings as a way to remember the teachings of the Lord and to meditate upon its truth. It is, however, not a chant like what many other religions practice.

6:14-16—“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” The prayer of a Christian is not only a personal relationship with God, it is also a relationship with others as well, as is emphasized here. These two verses are particularly related to whether God answers our prayers or not, and so the Lord especially mentions them here. This passage teaches us that God forgives our sins not because we have first forgiven others. Instead, we forgive because we know that we have been forgiven. We forgive those who have sinned against us out of gratefulness for our fellowship with God.<sup>13</sup>

3. Fasting (6:16-18): “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do...and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Fasting is an important part of our spiritual lives. It is a godly practice. Therefore, in Old Testament times, God especially appointed the tenth day of the seventh month to be the “Day of Atonement” for the Jewish people. On that day, they were to fast, to examine themselves, and to repent of their sins, so that they might be cleansed and blessed before the Lord (Lev 16:29-34). Unfortunately, many only pay attention to the outward act of “fasting” and neglect true “denial of self.” They only seek superficial godliness to gain the praise of man and ignore that the true essence of godliness is to please God. This is just like the example that is given in Scripture about a Pharisee who self-righteously prayed: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people...I fast twice a week” (Luke 18:11-12). Everything, however, is a matter of the heart. Even though we should not purposely tell others that we are fasting, we can still sign up or participate in church-wide prayer-fasts for a common goal. We can also tell others that prayer fasting is the reason why we cannot join them in certain activities as well.

Many Christians today make the opposite mistake and despise fasting. Some have never even fasted once in their lives. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why many Christians today are spiritually weak and unable to live out a powerful testimony for God.<sup>14</sup> The Lord Jesus instructed believers to fast. He said: “But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast” (Mark 2:20). This passage in Matthew 6 shows us that God desires us to fast, but He wants us to practice it properly. Likewise, He will reward us with a feast that is to come from heaven (6:18). Paul is an example of one who frequently fasted. This is why he said, “I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave” (1 Cor 9:27). He submitted his body under the control of the Holy Spirit so that he might not labor in vain before God.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from fasting, there are other ways to practice self-control, which is the last of the fruit of the Spirit and which some regard as the top tier of the pyramid. Self-control is self-denial. It is willingness to forgo certain entitlements for a period of time for a specific purpose, including those of a spiritual nature. For example: in order to pray, one sacrifices sleep or television time. Other indulgences such as food can hinder our focus and weaken our bodies and minds. Other

indulgences in certain forms of entertainment or relaxation might prevent us from praying with a pure heart and from having time to serve God. Lastly, in order not to cause others to stumble, we may also forgo certain hobbies and enjoyments at certain times (1 Cor 10:23).

The Lord Jesus used three illustrations to teach His disciples to examine their motives: giving, praying, and fasting. In every one of these examples, Jesus mentioned the Pharisees who practiced them before men. In doing so, they could only receive rewards from men. Yet, for those who practice these in secret and do not boast about them will receive their reward from the Father. God's reward is the Lord's precious promise to those who simply desire to seek God's pleasure. God will reward them and satisfy them, and they will also receive the acknowledgement and praise of man in the end. For such people, God's power follows them as a mark in their lives. Likewise, before the judgment seat of Christ, they will receive God's glorious reward (2 Cor 5:10).

The length of fasting is determined by the individual according to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and personal health. Such is required to be able to fast appropriately and please the Lord. In addition, reading the Scriptures and praying are essential during times of fasting.

1) Three different ways to fast:

- a) Absolute fasting: No intake of water or food (Acts 9:9). Such fasting should not last more than three days because the body needs fluid.
- b) General fasting: Can drink water but no food intake—solid or liquid; may fast for one meal or for one to three days.
- c) Partial fasting: Restricting certain food intake like Daniel and his three friends (Dan 1:8-16). Such fasting is most appropriate for the elderly and those who are unable to do general fasts.<sup>16</sup>

2) Opportunities for Fasting. According to the Scriptures, we may practice fasting in the following situations:

- a) When confessing and repenting sins (Lev 16:16-22, 29-34)—Thoroughly examine one's sin through fasting and to deeply acknowledge the consequence of such sin in order to arrive at a sincere and thorough repentance (Ps 51:17).
- b) When facing a crisis or a big decision (Ezra 4:3-16; Jonah 3:5-10)—Whether as an individual, family, or nation, when facing crisis, we can fast to demonstrate our true repentance before the Lord and our complete trust in Him. God's guidance and deliverance often comes as a result.
- c) When facing spiritual battles—We need to bring our flesh into submission through fasting so that we can be spiritual warriors in the fight against the devil.
- d) When participating in ministry (Acts 13:2)—Prayerful fasts can bring us into deeper fellowship with the Lord and help us gain the needed power and revival for ministry. All monumental mission's movements or revivals all begin with fasts.<sup>17</sup> Are you willing to begin fasting for just one or two meals a week and to pray especially for your family members and friends who are not believers yet?

## **II. 6:19–34 The heavenly Father provides for those who wholeheartedly serve Him.**

In the previous passage, Jesus mentioned (6:1-18) the danger of seeking satisfaction and reward from the praises of man. This passage now speaks of the danger of seeking satisfaction and security from the treasures of earth.

6:19-21—"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Why does it not say: "Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also"? This is because when you store up treasures in heaven, your heart will be focused on heaven. However, when your treasures are stored on earth, your heart will only look at the earth and not on the things above (Col 3:2). The Lord is not against

material wealth, for He delights in diligent work. What He desires is for us to possess true treasures. Jesus mentioned two kinds of treasures here: earthly and heavenly. Earthly treasures can be lost (destroyed by moth and rust or stolen by thieves). They can only bring temporary satisfaction that comes with many worries. Heavenly treasures, on the other hand, will never be lost and will bring true peace and security.

The Bible teaches us that the way to store up treasure is not by “saving” but by “giving.” It is not to “receive” but to “give” (Acts 20:35). Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38). The treasures that are spoken here may not be money. To some, it may be career or talents while to others, it may be family, home, children, spouse, physical beauty, or interests. What is the treasure and idol that has stolen your heart? Is it your children? Your home? Your money? Or your career? The Lord has given us an easy assessment: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (6:21). Therefore, whatever hobby or interest we spend the most time on reveals where our heart is.

6:22-23—“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.” When our eyes lust after the treasures of this world or idols, our eyes become unhealthy (darkened) and blurry, unable to see anything clearly.<sup>19</sup> For example, when we covet, focusing on what others have that we do not, we begin to harbor bitterness and jealousy in our hearts, and our whole being becomes darkened and our vision distorted. Therefore, what we see or focus on is very important. What we see with our inner eyes determine our outward behavior. If you have only one vision, that is, to glorify God, then Christ becomes your goal, motive, and mindset, and your life will be filled with God’s enlightenment. Consequently, all you do will be pleasing to God. Yet, if on the contrary, you have other goals and mindsets, then you will be unable to walk in the will of God with all that you do, and your life will suffer loss as a result.

6:24—“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” This describes someone who wants to serve God and live for money as well. The Greek here is *mammon*. It is a Semitic word for money or possessions. If mammon is our master, then it will become the root of our failure and pain. We cannot serve both God and mammon. No one who is double-minded has ever succeeded and is truly happy. We should choose to wholeheartedly serve the Lord over pursuing material wealth, for our Lord is forever trustworthy. He has bought and redeemed us from sin with the heavy price of His precious blood. We ought to serve Him only and wholeheartedly.

6:25-31—“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?” The word “therefore” is a conjunction that connects what comes after to the previous passage, 6:19-24. When we treasure Christ, our eyes will be focused on His will, and we will be willing to serve and obey Him as our Master. We then no longer need to worry for the provisions of life because our heavenly Father knows our needs and will care for us. If however, we pursue after material goods, it will be very difficult for us to trust God in faith.

The Lord Jesus taught us to not to worry, but to learn from the birds of the air and from the lilies of the field. Let us not misinterpret the Lord’s Word and become lazy and unproductive or fail to plan for our lives and work. Even though the birds of the air do not sow or reap, they must fly and seek food! Likewise, even though the lilies of the field neither toil nor spin, they themselves still need to be rooted into the soil in order to grow and bloom. As long as they do their part, God’s grace is always sufficient. It is the same with us as well. We must work diligently but without worry.<sup>20</sup> Worry only tears us apart. How can we not worry or be anxious? The Lord told us three secrets in 6:32-34:

1. Trust in the care of the heavenly Father. “For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them” (6:32). The Lord Jesus teaches us that one way to worry-free living is to become like a little child and trust simply in the loving kindness of our Father. He will not neglect or forget any of our needs. We only have to obey His word and trust

the way He provides, not doubting His way and His timing. He is our heavenly Father. “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you” (Isa 49:15)!

2. Be mindful of the things of the kingdom of God. “[S]eek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (6:33). This is the key verse for the entire passage. It is a command with a promise. Seeking God’s kingdom and His righteousness first is the key to not worrying. God will “give” (or “add”) to us all that we need. It reminds us to have the right perspective concerning God’s provision for our material needs. To trust in God’s provision does not mean to be lazy and not work (1 Thess 4:11; 2 Thess 3:10). It is simply a matter of priority. We need to set the Father’s business as our priority, which is to place spiritual matters as the first priority in life. When we wholeheartedly seek after God’s kingdom and His righteousness, God promises to give us all we need.
3. Commit all our cares to God. “Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (6:34). The third secret to overcoming worry and anxiety is to fulfill today’s duty and entrust tomorrow’s hardships into God’s hand. The grace and strength that God gives us every day is sufficient for us to bear each day’s burdens (2 Cor 12:9). The Apostle Paul testified that the grace of the Lord is sufficient. Since tomorrow’s grace cannot be allocated for today, to bear tomorrow’s burden today will inevitably cause us to feel “helpless” and to fall into deeper despair and anxiety. All we need to do is to bear one day’s burden with one day’s measure of grace. That is sufficient!<sup>21</sup>

“Do not worry” are repeated many times in this section of Scripture. We have come to see that committing our worries to God is an act of faith. Perhaps some might say, “I do not know how to give my worries to God.” All we need to do is to tell God the things we are concerned about through prayer and ask Him to bear our burdens. Then, the peace of God that transcends all understanding will help us lay down our burdens and be anxious no more (Phil 4:6-7).

#### **D. Conclusion**

Are you building your sense of security for this life on God? Do you worry, not knowing what security there is in life that is centered on God? The answer to this question is: when God is your treasure, when the light of His truth fills your whole being, and when you joyfully serve your Master and heavenly Father, He will provide for all your needs, which includes food, clothing, and shelter. He is your loving Father. He knows all your needs better than even you know them!

\* \* \* \* \*

## List of Sources Consulted

Sources Consulted	Series/Publisher	Annotations
#1. 天國君王	宣道	1:#1.p160
#2. 基督生平	校園	2:#2.p163
#3. 巴克萊每日研經叢書	基督教文藝	3:#17.p21
#4. 天道研經導讀	天道	4:#16.p24
#5. 作個忠心者	學園	5:#17.p21
#6. 摩根解經—馬太福音	活泉	6:#7.p65
#7. 認識你的王	播道	7:#2.p167
#8. 漁夫查經系列—天國子民	更新	8:#17.p21
#9. 馬太福音研經材料	校園	9:#2.p168–169
#10. 主耶穌的生命與事奉	更新	10:#15.p1353
#11. 詹遜自助研經課程	種籽	11:#2.p169–170
#12. 聖經書卷系列—馬太福音	浸信	12:#1.p168
#13. 基督生平	華神	13:#1.p167,169
#14. 基督生平中的關鍵時機	活泉	14:#2.p171
#15. 中文聖經啟導本	海天	15:#20.p77–78
#16. 聖經靈修版	國際聖經協會	16:#16.p26
#17. 信徒聖經註釋	角聲	17:#2.p172
#18. 經文分析排版—馬太福音	聖經信息協會	18:#1.p174
#19. 聖經預言圖解	聖經事奉協會	19:#17.p22
#20. 聖經全書註釋	瑞福	20:#2.p175
#21. 摩根解經	更新	21:#1.p178–180
#22. 聖經串珠註釋	福音證主	