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By Dan Maines

Matthew 6

Matthew 6:1

Take care not to practice your righteousness in the sight of people, to be noticed by them; otherwise, you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

† Jesus warns against outward show of righteousness. The Pharisees sought praise of men, but true righteousness is before God.

† Josephus notes how Pharisees were admired for outward display (Antiquities 13.288). Jesus exposes their hypocrisy.

† To us today, it shows that seeking human approval empties spiritual value. True faith is lived for God alone.

Matthew 6:2-4

So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, so that they will be praised by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your charitable giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

† Giving was commanded, but many did it publicly for reputation. Jesus calls for humility in giving.

† The Mishnah records almsgiving as central to Jewish life (Peah 1:1), but Jesus redefines it as a matter of the heart.

† To us today, it proves God values sincerity, not show. Quiet generosity is true kingdom giving.

Matthew 6:5-6

And when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they will be seen by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But as for you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

† Prayer was often performed for display. Jesus commands private prayer to the Father.

† Philo criticized hypocritical prayer that sought man's attention (On the Special Laws 1.319). Jesus aligns with this critique.

† To us today, it shows that prayer is intimate communion with God, not public theater.

Matthew 6:7-8

And when you are praying, do not use thoughtless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

† Pagan rituals emphasized endless repetition. Jesus contrasts this with simple trust in the Father.

† Tacitus described how Gentile worship was filled with repetitive chants (Histories 4.83). Jesus rejects this.

† To us today, it teaches us that prayer is about relationship, not formulas.

Matthew 6:9-13

Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father, who is 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 lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

† The Lord's Prayer is covenantal. It recognizes God as Father, seeks His kingdom, depends on Him for provision, forgiveness, and protection.

† Early church fathers like Tertullian emphasized this prayer as the model of Christian devotion (On Prayer 2).

† To us today, it proves the kingdom was imminent, and God's will was being done on earth in Christ's fulfillment.

Matthew 6:14-15

For if you forgive other people for their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses.

† Forgiveness is the foundation of covenant life. Without it, no one stands righteous.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls stressed separation from offenders, but Jesus calls for forgiveness (1QS 9.21).

† To us today, it shows forgiveness is not optional. It's the mark of the kingdom.

Matthew 6:16-18

Now whenever you fast, do not make a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they distort their faces so that they will be noticed by people when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But as for you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that your fasting will not be noticed by people, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

† Fasting was often abused for self-display. Jesus restores it as private devotion.

† Josephus records how Pharisees fasted twice a week for public display (Antiquities 18.12). Jesus rejects this empty ritual.

† To us today, it shows that true devotion is hidden, sincere, and before God.

Matthew 6:19-21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

† Earthly wealth is temporary. Heavenly treasure is eternal.

† The Mishnah warns that wealth cannot follow into death (Avot 2:7). Jesus calls for eternal priorities.

† To us today, it shows that our hearts must rest in eternal covenant blessings, not possessions.

Matthew 6:22-23

The eye is the lamp of the body; so then, if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

† A clear eye symbolizes spiritual focus on God. A bad eye represents greed and envy.

† Philo used the eye as a metaphor for the soul's direction (On Dreams 1.34). Jesus applies it to devotion.

† To us today, it shows that what we set our eyes on shapes our whole life.

Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

† Wealth competes with God as a master. Double loyalty is impossible.

† Early church fathers like Clement of Alexandria stressed this verse to warn against greed (Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved? 12).

† To us today, it proves devotion to God must be undivided.

Matthew 6:25-27

For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the sky, that they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather crops into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more important than they? And which of you by worrying can add a single day to his life span?

† Anxiety contradicts trust in God's provision. Jesus illustrates with birds and daily life.

† Tacitus mocked human anxiety over wealth, noting how it ruined nations (Histories 5.5). Jesus addresses the same weakness in individuals.

† To us today, it shows that worry is wasted. God provides for His people.

Matthew 6:28-30

And why are you worried about clothing? Notice how the lilies of the field grow; they do not labor nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!

† The beauty of creation testifies to God's care. Worry is a failure of faith.

† Josephus described Solomon's splendor (Antiquities 8.185), yet Jesus says nature surpasses it by God's hand.

† To us today, it reminds us that God values us more than creation itself.

Matthew 6:31-34

Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

† The kingdom is the priority. When it's sought first, all needs are met.

† Origen taught that those who seek the kingdom gain what is eternal, and daily needs are given by God (On Prayer 27).

† To us today, it shows that anxiety is replaced by kingdom focus. God provides what we need.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Josephus, Antiquities 13.288; 18.12; 8.185

† Mishnah, Peah 1:1; Avot 2:7

† Philo, On the Special Laws 1.319; On Dreams 1.34

† Tacitus, Histories 4.83; 5.5

† Dead Sea Scrolls: 1QS 9.21

† Tertullian, On Prayer 2

† Cyprian, On the Lord's Prayer 15

† Clement of Alexandria, Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved? 12

† Origen, On Prayer 27

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