

# Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

July 21, 2024

## I. Introduction

A. **Matthew 6:24–34**, “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. [25] 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 not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? [26] Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? [27] And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? [28] And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, [29] yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. [30] 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! [31] Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ [32] For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33] But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. [34] So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

B. An overview of the Sermon on the Mount from **Matthew 5:3-6:34**

1. In **5:3-12**, Jesus begins His teaching with the Beatitudes – eight characteristics of godliness that make for a blessed, or happy life. These form the foundation for the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.
2. In **5:13-20**, Jesus talks about Christians being salt and light – which means we are to live the Christian life publicly, for the glory of God and the good of others, in spite of possible persecution. Jesus goes on to talk about fulfilling the Law, and the necessity of having a righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees.
3. In **5:21-48**, the focus is on relationships between Christians and those around them – from family members to enemies. Jesus uses six examples from the Law or current teaching to show that in human relationships fulfilling the law means loving everyone around us by treating them as we want to be treated.

4. In **6:1-18**, Jesus shifts the focus to the believer's relationship to God. And the essence of this teaching is that we are not to use God or our religious practices to gain praise and admiration for ourselves. Instead, we are to interact with God and participate in our religious practices for the purpose of relating to God and pleasing Him.
5. In **6:19-23**, the focus is on pursuing and doing what results in the accumulation of eternal treasure as opposed to insecure earthly treasure. And we are to be as single-minded as is possible in this life.
6. **Matthew 6:24** concludes **6:1-23** and transitions to a focus on ending anxiety and fear by trusting God to be our source of provision instead of trusting in wealth and self-sufficiency – because trusting in anyone or anything other than God for our daily needs makes us prone to anxiety and fear which in turn makes us prone to selfishness and sin.
7. Today, we will conclude **6:1-23** and transition to **6:25-34**.

### C. Pray

## II. Divided allegiance to competing masters is unsustainable

- A. DSB paraphrase: [24] You cannot be a slave to two masters who are competing against each other; for either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be strongly attached and whole-heartedly committed to one and look down on and treat the other with disdain. You cannot be a slave of God and the self-sufficiency of wealth.
  1. At a first reading, this may seem like more of an exaggeration than a truth. After all, many people work two jobs, which means two bosses, and they manage to do it without hating either boss.
  2. Besides, here in the US, we've combined wealth and religion for years. In fact, though our money says "In God we trust," the behavior of most Americans, including Christians, says "In money we trust."
  3. What is required to get an accurate understanding of vs 24? We must take careful note of the words, examine the larger context, and include an understanding of life in a setting with masters and slaves.
  4. Jesus begins by saying, "No one can serve two masters." This provides the setting – where we are the slaves, and our owner and master is either God or wealth. Interestingly, the word "wealth" comes from a Greek word that ties wealth with self-sufficiency. And it is my experience that when we have wealth, we tend to rely on our wealth instead of God.
  5. In the master/slave world, the master expects to have complete authority over the slave so that the slave will do whatever the master

- wills. And the slave understands that he is expected to be fully devoted to doing his master's will.
6. Obviously, these conditions make it impossible to serve two masters in a fully devoted way. However, as Jesus makes clear in **vs 25-34**, this illustration goes further, because God and wealth are two co-operating masters, but two masters who hold opposing ways and means of providing for our daily needs and wants and our future security and well-being.
    - a. This means that God and wealth are two masters who expect their slaves to serve according to their will.
    - b. But because each hold ways and means of dealing with the needs of everyday life that are in conflict with each another, you cannot rely on God **and at the same time** rely on the self-sufficiency of wealth to provide what you need or want – whether it is for today, tomorrow, or far into the future.
- B. This raises the questions: In what ways are their ways and means in conflict with each other?
1. **First**, God's ways and means require seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness. In other words, to rely on God and have our reliance produce the intended results requires a serious pursuit of God and godliness. The ungodly have no hope of God's provision in the same way and to the same extent the godly do.
    - a. Wealth makes no such requirement. It allows us to be as selfish and sinful as we want, yet it still produces the desired results.
    - b. Therefore, the conflict in ways and means regards personal godliness, values, and the way we treat those around us.
  2. **Second**, God's ways and means frees us from anxiety over not having enough for today, and frees us from fear over not having enough in the future.
    - a. Wealth may give us a sense of security now and for the future, but any threat of lack or even a perceived threat of lack becomes a cause for concern, anxiety, fear and selfish solutions.
    - b. This is a conflict regarding reality – as to the long-term consequences of our choices and behavior, true security vs. perceived security, and the value of inward peace vs. fear-driven efforts.
  3. **Third**, God's ways and means depend on **His** riches, **His** love, and **His** faithfulness, **along with** the treasure we've stored up in heaven.
    - a. The ways and means of wealth depend on storing up sufficient treasure on earth (?), the stability of the economy and government, and the ability to protect our stored treasure until it is needed.

- b. This is a conflict regarding logic and wisdom – as to who or what is genuinely dependable.
    - 4. The reality is, it is impossible to be whole-heartedly committed to two masters with conflicting ways and means. You can try, but God’s will and word will not allow you to serve wealth, and wealth cannot be served while living according to the will and word of God.
- C. [25] **For this reason** (*because you cannot serve God and wealth*) I say to you, do not be worried (*anxious*) 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 not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?
  - 1. The way to break free from serving wealth is to stop worrying about having enough to meet your daily needs.
    - a. The reality is, anxiety and fear are useless. They cannot solve our problems or provide what we need – in the moment or in the future.
    - b. This does not mean we can become lazy and do nothing, or that we are to depend on others to meet our needs when we are healthy enough to work. As Christians, we are to work and be responsible with our finances – so that we have enough for those under our care and for those outside our home who are in need.
  - 2. Therefore, what needs to change is our perspective – from trusting wealth instead of God, or from trying to trust wealth and God.
    - a. As **Hebrews 13:5-6** says, “Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,” [6] so that we confidently say, “**The Lord is my helper**, I will not be afraid. what will man do to me?”
    - b. From here, Jesus uses logic and examples from nature to convince us of the wisdom of trusting and serving God as opposed to the anxiety that accompanies trusting and serving wealth.
- D. [26] Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? [27] And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? [28] And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, [29] yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. [30] 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!**

1. If God takes care of the plants and animals, you can confidently trust Him to take care of you! And if this example is insufficient, look at **Romans 8:32**, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” and depend on **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”
  2. It is a show of **distrust** in the character of God and a **foolish** waste of time worrying about your needs being met. Why? Because worry changes nothing for the better. But it does change you for the worse.
    - a. However, many doubt God’s trustworthiness. They look at those who lack what they need and conclude that God is not as trustworthy as He claims to be.
    - b. Though this may seem like a rational conclusion, it overlooks the fact that God’s faithful provision of our needs is based on our **seeking first** His kingdom and His righteousness – which means doing our part within the boundaries of godliness – especially in relation to our business dealings and treatment of others.
  3. Now it is true, there may be times of persecution when God’s people are denied what they need for daily sustenance. But most of the time and in most cases, God’s provision is sufficient.
  4. You may never have as much as those who trust in wealth, yet the words of **Psalms 37:25** are trust, “I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread.”
- E. [31] Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ [32] For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that **you need** all these things. [33] But **seek first** His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. [34] So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”
1. Three vital truths for this to work in a reasonable, practical ways.
    - a. **Do not worry** like the unbelievers. Fight worry by choosing to trust/rely on God to provide what you need as you do your part.
    - b. Remember, **God knows** what you need. And according to His care for the plants and animals, you can be assured He not only knows, He cares, and He cares enough to do what needs doing.
    - c. God places a **requirement** on you for this to work as intended. You must **seek first** His kingdom (*the rule of God in your life and*

*in the lives of everyone around you) and His righteousness (doing what is right and just for everyone around you).*

(1) **Notice:** Seeking first does not mean seeking exclusively.

(2) Seeking first means living a godly life so that you meet daily needs **without** neglecting God, the truths of God, love of God, and a proper love and care for those around you.

2. The principle of seeking first God's kingdom and His righteousness in order for God to make sure we have what we need comes from the Blessings and Curses of **Deuteronomy 28**. God's blessings come as a result of godly living. The curses or troubles come as a result of ungodly living. Therefore, seeking God first produces godly living which in turn brings God's blessings, which include His provision of our daily needs.

### III. Final thoughts

- A. **1 Timothy 6:8-11**, "If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. [9] But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. [10] For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. [11] But **flee** from these things, you man of God, and **pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.
- B. Two of the most powerful and prominent competitors to God and godliness are (1) trusting money to be your provider and source of security, and (2) immorality. Sadly, these two competitors seem to be as alluring to believers as they are to unbelievers.
- C. Anxiety and projecting doom are enemies of faith in God. Just as serving God and wealth are incompatible, so trusting God and giving way to anxiety and projecting doom are incompatible. Therefore, flee from anxiety over having enough, and pursue trusting God to provide enough.
- D. Hard work, providing for your own, and setting aside provisions for the future are all within the boundaries of godliness. What is not within the boundaries of godliness is putting hard work, providing for your own, and saving for the future ahead of seeking God's righteousness and His kingdom, for in so doing, you will give way to selfishness and sin, and fall short of loving God and those around you as you ought.