

# THE RED LETTER LECTURES

## NOTES

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Jesus' Teaching on Giving, Prayer and Fasting  
Matthew 6:1-18

#### I. Giving To The Poor

**BE CAREFUL\*** not to do your "acts of righteousness" before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. — Mt. 6:1

##### A. *Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness . . .*

1. An Imperative Command.
2. Lit., "pay attention." To hold the mind or ear toward someone.
3. A nautical term meaning to hold a ship in a direction, to sail toward a place.

##### B. *before men, to be seen by them.*

1. What's the danger here? Why the warning?  
See *Prov 16:18-19; Rom. 12:16; Jas. 4:6.*

##### C. *no reward from your Father . . .*

1. You will lose the blessing for doing a good deed by your wanting to make sure every one knows about it.

So when you give to the needy, **DO NOT ANNOUNCE\*** it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. — Mt. 6:2

##### A. *when you give to the needy . . .*

1. God is deeply concerned about the poor.  
See *Prov. 14:31; 19:17.*

Read Boice, pp. 152-57.

Prov. 16:18-19: Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.

Rom. 12:16: Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Jas. 4:6: But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Prov. 14:31: He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

Prov. 19:17: He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.

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### B. *Do not announce it with trumpets . . .*

1. An Imperative Command.
2. A trumpet was probably the traditional *shofar*. It was used to announce events and get people's attention.
3. Metaphorically, this could mean something like "tooting your own horn," or drawing attention to yourself.

But when you give to the needy, **DO NOT LET\*** your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. — Mt. 6:3-4

### A. *Do not let . . .*

1. An Imperative Command.
2. A metaphor. Your hand has no way of sensing what it's doing.

### B. *your giving may be in secret . . .*

1. The idea is to do your giving to the poor anonymously or with with no fanfare.

### C. *your Father, who sees . . . will reward you.*

1. God does reward faithfulness. There is a reward promise based on our good works. But our good deeds have nothing to do with our salvation. See *Eph. 2:8-10, 6:7-8; Rev. 22:12.*

## II. Prayer

And when you pray, **DO NOT BE\*** like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. — Mt. 6:5

### A. *Do not be like the hypocrites . . .*

1. An Imperative Command.

Eph. 2:8-10: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Eph. 6:7-8: Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

Rev. 22:12: Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

Read Boice, pp. 158-206

2. A hypocrite is one who acts pretentiously, a counterfeit, a person who assumes and speaks or acts under a feigned character.<sup>13</sup>
3. Actors on a stage were called hypocrites. Why?

But when you pray, **GO INTO YOUR ROOM\***, close the door and **PRAY TO YOUR FATHER\***, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.  
— Mt. 6:6

A. *Go into your room . . . and pray to your Father . . .*

1. Imperative Commands.
2. Does this preclude public prayers?
3. Your best prayers will be those done in secret — with just you and God.  
*See Psm. 91:1-4.*

And when you pray, **DO NOT KEEP\*** on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. **DO NOT BE\*** like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. — Mt. 6:7-8

A. *Do not keep on babbling . . .*

1. An Imperative Command.
2. His point is that his disciples should avoid meaningless, repetitive prayers offered under the misconception that mere length will make prayers efficacious.
3. It is not the length of prayer but the strength of prayer that prevails with God.<sup>14</sup>
4. Jesus often prayed all night and even repeated His prayers. *See Mt. 26:39, 42, 44.*

B. *Do not be like them . . . your Father knows . . .*

1. An Imperative Command.
2. God already knows what you need. Then why do we need to pray and ask for what we need?

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<sup>13</sup> Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament*, p. 1424

Psm. 91:1-4: He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

<sup>14</sup> Nelson's *New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, p. 1151

Mt. 26:39,42,44: Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." . . . He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." . . . So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

This, then, is how **YOU SHOULD PRAY\*** Our Father in heaven, **HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME\***, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. — Mt. 6:9-13

A. *You should pray . . .*

1. An Imperative Command. Lit., "you be praying."
2. Notice how short the "Our Father" prayer is and yet how much it covers.
3. The prayer is composed of six requests. The first three ask for God's kingdom to come, the last three are for God to meet the needs of His people until His kingdom comes.<sup>15</sup>

B. *Our Father . . .*

1. Israel was slow to understand the possibility of a personal relationship with God as their heavenly Father.
2. In all of the OT, only in Isaiah is this truth presented. See *Isa. 63:16, 64:8*.
3. This is why the Jews were so upset at Jesus for claiming that relationship with God. See *Jn. 5:18*.
4. The Jews of today still have the same problem.

C. *in heaven . . .*

1. His location or domain.
2. Not limited to this world.

D. *Hallowed be your name . . .*

1. An Imperative Command.
2. Lit., "Let your name be sanctified," or "set apart."

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<sup>15</sup> Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, p. 1151

Isa. 63:16: But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

Isa. 64:8: Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Jn. 5:18: For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

E. *Your kingdom come . . .*

1. God's perfect will is always being done in heaven. We are instructed to ask for the same to be done on the earth.
2. When we ask for His perfect will on the earth, God expects us to be willing to be a part of that answer, e.g., "obedience."
3. Jesus came to display God's perfect will on the earth. See *Jn. 6:38*.
4. Jesus always deferred to the Father's will. See *Lk. 22:42*.

F. *Give us today our daily bread . . .*

1. Lit., "give us today the bread for today."
2. Notice the emphasis on enough food for today only. This is reminiscent of the daily manna in the wilderness. See *Num. 11:9*.

G. *forgive us . . . as we also have forgiven . . .*

1. Forgiveness asked is forgiveness given but is there a condition to this request?
2. Forgiving others is key to God forgiving us. It is key to all of our relationships both within and without the body of Christ. See *Col. 3:13*.
3. Jesus modeled forgiveness like no other. See *Lk. 23:24*.
4. Question: If we do not forgive others, will God forgive us? See *Mt. 6:14-15*

H. *lead us not . . . but deliver us . . . evil . . .*

1. God never tempts us to do evil. See *Jas. 1:13-14*.
2. This is a plea for God's help with our daily struggle with the temptation to sin.
3. Lit., "the evil one." Speaking of the devil.

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*Jn. 6:38:* For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

*Lk. 22:42:* Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.

*Num. 11:9:* When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down.

*Col. 3:13:* Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

*Lk. 23:24:* Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

*Mt. 6:14-15:* For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

*Jas. 1:13-14:* When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

4. The "Our Father" is the most recited prayer in all of Christian history. Sadly, it is often recited in rote by many.
5. Teaching His disciples to pray, Jesus adopted a fairly common Jewish prayer called the *Kaddish*, which was prayed regularly in the synagogues and included the lines, "Exalted and hallowed be His great name . . . and may He cause His kingdom to rule."<sup>16</sup>

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

— Mt. 6:14-15

A. *forgive . . . but if you do not . . .*

1. A "hard" saying. See *Jn. 6:60*.
2. Are there certain sins that God will not forgive? What effect does that have on our eternal salvation?
3. Doesn't God forgive all of our sins when we come to Him? See *1 Jn. 1:9-10*.
4. The context of this verse is prayer. Since prayer presumes a relationship with God as a person. If we have sinned against Him and grieved the Holy Spirit, and the sin has not been forgiven, it interrupts our relationship with God. See *Eph. 4:30-31*.
5. If we have unforgiveness in our hearts against someone else, then we are not acting in a way that is pleasing to God or helpful to us. So God declares that he will distance Himself from us until we forgive others.<sup>17</sup> See *Isa. 59:1-2*.

### III. Fasting

When you fast, **DO NOT LOOK SOBER\*** as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, **PUT OIL ON\*** your head and **WASH YOUR FACE\***,

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<sup>16</sup> Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, p. 1151.

*Jn. 6:60*: On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

*1 Jn. 1:9-10*: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

*Eph. 4:30-31*: And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>3</sup>Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

<sup>17</sup> Wayne Gruden, *Systematic Theology*, p. 386.

*Isa. 59:1-2*: Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Read Boice, pp. 207-12.

so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

— Mt. 6:16-18

A. *When you fast . . .*

1. Fasting is to abstain from eating. In the NT it only refers to private fasting.
2. The Lord spoke of it as a voluntary exercise.
3. It is also connected to effective prayer.  
See Acts 14:23.

B. *do not look sober . . .*

1. An Imperative Command.
2. Lit., "grim faced, stern, gloomy, a sad countenance.

C. *Put oil on . . . wash your face . . .*

1. Imperative Commands.
2. In other words, do what you normally do, look like you normally look like — and call no attention to what you are doing.

IV. Imperative Commands in this section of study.

- A. **BE CAREFUL** not to be a spiritual show off.
- B. **DO NOT ANNOUNCE** your giving.
- C. **DO NOT LET** others know what you give.
- D. **DO NOT BE** like the hypocrites (actors).
- E. **GO INTO YOUR ROOM** to pray.
- F. **PRAY TO YOUR FATHER** in secret.
- G. **DO NOT KEEP ON BABBLING** like unbelievers.

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Acts 14:23: Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

- H. **DO NOT BE LIKE** unbelievers.
- I. **YOU SHOULD PRAY** simply.
- J. **HALLOWED (HOLY)** is His Name.
- K. **DO NOT LOOK** sober like an actor.
- L. **PUT OIL ON** your head which was normal.
- M. **WASH YOUR FACE** which is normal.

## NOTES