

# A Study of the Christ

## Text

Sermon on the Mount

**Matthew**

**Mark**

**Luke**

**John**

6:1-34

## Overriding Principles

- The heart, not outward show, is the place God looks to find who we really are.
- God will provide.
- Be careful what choices you make, they determine whether we are God's or Satan's.

## Main Points

- Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in Heaven (Matt. 6:1).
- But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you (Matt. 6:33).

## Secondary Points of History, Culture, Words, and Grammar

- A true test of our religion is whether we must be seen by men practicing it to find satisfaction. Is our motivation God or pride (**Matt. 6:1**; Matt. 23:5)?
- Alms are gifts of charity, not to be confused with regular offerings which were often public in nature. This verse does not prohibit all forms of public giving any more than the instruction on prayer (Matt. 6:5-6) prohibits public prayer (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-8). The instruction here and through verse 18 deals primarily with the need for worship and service to be rooted in our personal relationship to God—if He is pleased, we should be pleased (**Matt. 6:2**; Mk. 12:41-44).
- The rewards of a prideful exhibition are no greater than the momentary adulation they might bring; the rewards of true devotion are incalculable. The word for "to be seen" is *qeaqhnaï* (theathanai), from which we get the word *theatrical* (**Matt. 6:1**; Matt. 23:1-12).

- The instruction Jesus gives on prayer has to do primarily with our private prayer life. Content, not length, is the important factor. The Christ stresses the importance of: the Fatherhood and holiness of God; the importance of God's kingdom (His rule) both for our lives and in the world, the ability to be satisfied with needs rather than wants, the absolute necessity of practicing forgiveness, and the need for God's help in times of temptation (**Matt. 6:7-15**; Lk. 11:2-4; II Cor. 1:3; Lev. 19:2; Rom. 14:7; Lk. 22:42; Prov. 30:8; Matt. 18:21-35; I Cor. 10:13).
- Fasting was a longstanding cultural expression among the Jews and many other peoples. It centers on the principle that there are times when normal life needs to be suspended for the sake of more holy priorities. In the case of fasting, food would be the thing given up to allow one to address needs of a more spiritual nature. Holy undertakings, distress, mourning and repentance were four common reasons for fasting (Ex. 34:28; Dan. 9:3; Jud. 20:26; Ps. 35:13; I Sam. 31:13; Neh. 9:1). The Jews had only one prescribed fast, and it, the Day of Atonement, is even somewhat doubtful (Lev. 16:29; 23:27; cf. Ps. 35:13; Isa. 58:3). Jesus is here, as with alms giving and prayer, prescribing for private expressions of religion. Such fasting is not to be broadcast; it is to be between a person and their God. Should we fast today? Undoubtedly with regard to food and other otherwise needful things, there should be times when more holy activities gain our undivided attention. Nevertheless, such practices are between a person and his God (**Matt. 6:16-18**).
- Jesus' teaching on earthly versus heavenly treasure can easily be misunderstood. Wealth per se is not evil, but the priority of amassing wealth is. This is a matter of priority. That being said, it is still important to note that wealth very often carries a heavy load of temptations—beware (**Matt. 6:19-21**; Matt. 19:23-24)!
- The "eye" as the lamp of the body does not refer to the physical eye. Jesus has in mind our spiritual perception. If our view of the world around us does not see from God's point of view, we are in great darkness. We are doomed to fail eternally with such a distorted sense of things as comes with our own sight (**Matt. 6:22-23**; I Cor. 1:18-2:2; II Cor. 5:7; Matt. 15:14).
- Jesus boils service down to its lowest common denominator with the remarks about service to a master. We will either choose God or we will choose something temporal, "mammon" standing for material possessions. We fool ourselves if we think otherwise—to not serve God is to serve mammon. The point is reinforced

with great strength as Jesus uses birds of the air and lilies of the field to portray God's care for the creation. If He cares so for birds and flowers, how much more does He care for us. God's people must, therefore, be different from worldly people—with us God and His will (the meaning of "kingdom") must be first. We are to take life one day at a time rather than fretting over all manner of woes that our lack of faith magnifies into monsters (**Matt. 6:24-34**).

- The word seek, *zhteite* (*zeteite*), is in a form that indicates continued action in this context (**Matt. 6:33**).
- Care for tomorrow, such as a farmer's preparations for future crops, etc., is expected, anxiety, however, is soundly forbidden (**Matt. 6:34**).

## Relationship to the Church

- Christianity is not about putting up a good front, neither is it about selfish gratification; it is about heartfelt devotion that will express itself for God's sake.
- Avoiding improper outward demonstrations of righteousness does not mean, however, that we are to live in secret—we have already seen otherwise (Matt. 5:13-16). An important key to life is to find the balance between Matthew 5:16 and Matthew 6:1.
- Every Christian should have a rich life of private devotion to God.
- God must be revered, but as a Father, not as a dictator.
- God's will must be a thing the Christian desires above anything to do with self.
- Forgiveness from God will, among other things, be based on our forgiveness toward others.
- Temptations are powerful things; we need God if we are to overcome.
- There are times when our normal way of life needs to be interrupted for things more high and holy.
- If our spiritual perception is not shaped by God, we walk in a darkness that is most terrible!
- True treasures are things of an eternal nature; our actions and decisions should show that we know this to be the true.
- We will serve something, either God or something else.
- God first, God always first!
- Anxiety is but practical atheism.

## Who is Jesus?

- He is the One who sees through our selfishness and points us to a life of integrity.
- He is the Son of God who must give preference to His Father even as we must.
- He shows us where we can find true value and true meaning.
- He would have our lives blessed richly in truth; He must have a great love for us!