

Sermon on the Mount - Part 1

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of doing good deeds and praying in secret, without seeking to be seen or praised by others, and the importance of forgiving others in order to maintain a healthy relationship with God.

Duration: 42:37

Scripture: Matthew 6:1, Matthew 6:19

Topics: "Sermon on the Mount"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of giving in secret, as taught by Jesus. He warns against giving to be seen by others, as this leads to a reward only in the earthly realm. The speaker shares his gratitude for the support of the work of the school by those who give out of their poverty, highlighting the principle that little is much when God is involved. He also criticizes the trend in Christianity of focusing too much on money and the use of un-sanctified money. The speaker suggests that Christians should work diligently for their own needs and give everything above that to the work of the Lord.

Transcript

So we turn tonight to Matthew, chapter 6. Chapter 6, we'll begin reading with, "...that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound the trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But, at times, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corner of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet. When thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which is in secret shall reward thee openly.

When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their speaking. Be not ye therefore alike unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner, therefore, pray ye, our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But thou wilt thou fastest anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which is in secret shall reward thee openly. 1. In verse 1 of this chapter you have a general exhortation from the Lord Jesus to his disciples, and actually there is a change of one word that will be helpful to us here. I don't know if the margin of your Bible shows this, but in verse 1 the word alms should be righteousness.

In other words, what the Lord Jesus is saying in verse 1 is that no matter what form of righteousness we practice, we should do it privately and in secret. Then he goes on to give three types in the sections that follow. Verse 1 is general.

He says, When you do your righteousnesses, do them in secret. Then the first he takes up alms, then the second prayer, and the third fasting. He gives three particular types.

So we'll read verse 1, He that ye do not show righteousness before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. It's wonderful how the word of God pierces through and exposes the human heart. A lot of times there's a tendency to do things to be seen of men, and if men didn't see you do it, there'd be no fun in it at all.

Well, in approaching God in service and in worship, God doesn't want that attitude to control our lives. He doesn't want that to be the motive of our lives. We have a God who's invisible, but who sees in secret, and he will reward openly.

Now, the first exhortation is that when we do our alms, we should do them in secret. And alms, of course, have to do with deeds of kindness, deeds of charity. And the rather ridiculous picture is given in this portion of Scripture that the hypocrite liked to go down into the marketplace and blow a trumpet and attract all kinds of attention before they gave their gift to the Red Feather Fund, or some other notable work of charity.

And of course you can see the humor in such a situation, and yet it's real and true to life. It isn't the Christian way, but it is the way of the world. And you know, it's too bad that it has even crept into Christendom today.

For instance, you have great organizations that promise to publish the lists of donors if they give above a certain amount. Well, that's the very type of thing that is spoken of here. I remember not so long ago being in a neighborhood, and a certain church went around collecting money from the people in the neighborhood, and they promised them that if they gave a certain amount, their names would be inscribed in the marble floor in front of the altar.

Well, that's the very type of thing that's spoken of in this portion of Scripture. And sad to say, in Christendom today there is a lot of giving that never would take place unless it was publicized. And of course, this is directly contrary to the spirit of the Lord Christ.

He says, when you do your arm, don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. Isn't that a lovely way of putting it? Don't let your right hand know. In other words, of course, it's a figurative expression, and you mustn't press it too far.

But the idea is to do it so secretly, over on this side, that the hand over on this side doesn't really know what's going on. Of course, it does know, because they're both connected to one central nervous system to the brain. But never mind.

We know what this means in practice, and thank God we know Christians who are practicing this too. And I thank God for Christians with whom I am associated, with whom I have fellowship, and who live this type of a life. They don't let their right hand know what their left hand is doing.

And I think in that connection it would be fitting for me just to pause here and express our thanks to the Saints here in Durham and the Gospel Center for their loving interest in the work of the Lord at Emmaus, and also to those associated with the LNM Bible class, and to many others who stand by faithfully in prayers and in sacrificial giving. It might surprise you tonight to know that rich people don't support the work of the Lord. I don't know whether you realize that or not, but the work of the Lord is carried on by people with very moderate means.

I have some reason to know that, because I've been there at the work of the school for over 14 years now, and have watched the gifts coming in from all over the country. And it bows my heart in gratitude to God when I think that the work has been supported, oftentimes in crucial moments, by people like widows who have given not out of their abundance, but out of their deep poverty. And we've learned the lesson that little is much if God is in it.

I often think of what dear Hudson Taylor once said in connection with the work of the Lord. He said, What we greatly have to fear is not too little money, but too much unsanctified money. Well, that isn't exactly the emphasis in Christendom today with all its begging.

You think the only problem in Christianity today was a shortage of money. Well, that isn't the case at all. Hudson Taylor was right.

What we have greatly to fear is not too little money, but too much unsanctified money. Well, the Lord Jesus here teaches us that when we do make our alms, we should do so in secret. He says, That thy alms may be in secret, and thy father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

If a person just gives to be seen, then he already has his reward. He won't get any reward in heaven. In other words, the purpose that he had in giving was to be seen of men.

Well, when he is seen of men, he's achieved his purpose. And you know, it is too bad that a lot of giving today is done with an idea of giving a person prestige in the community or even business connections, something like that. Well, it's all hostile to the spirit and intent of the word of God.

And then in the next verse, as you have a section on prayer, and the Lord Jesus says the same thing, he says, Don't be as a hypocrite when you pray. They love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the

corners of the streets that they may be seen of them. Now, I've seen this plenty of times.

I've gone by certain buildings and I've seen a man out in a black robe with a little black book in his hand, and he's praying up and down in public sites and gives the impression of being a very holy man. And of course, you can go to other sections of the world, and this is very, very common. The very thing that's described here.

In our culture, it almost seems strange that anybody would do this, but men do it, and they do it not too far away. Well, the word of God says they have their reward. They pray to be seen by others, and they are seen by others, and that's it.

Now, dear friends, this doesn't have anything to do with public prayer in the assembly of God's people. It doesn't have anything to do with that at all, because there are very explicit instructions to us in the word of God that when we come together, we are. Men ought always to pray, and men are to take the lead in prayer, of course, in the assembly of God's people.

I know a lot of Christians that have trouble in their mind with this question of praying in public. They say, well, I don't like to get up and pray in public because I'm afraid I'm just praying to be seen. Well, of course, we shouldn't pray to be seen, and yet I think that we should remember this, that as I said one night before, that in a sense everything we do is stained with sin, and we have a great high priest above, and he has on his forehead a mitre with the words holiness unto the Lord on it, and the mitre on his forehead is for the iniquity of holy things.

This is a comfort to me. I confess to you that sometimes I stand up to pray, and perhaps my motive is not 100% pure, but I do it, and I realize that the Lord is there, and all the iniquity in my holy things is removed before it ever gets to God the Father. So I try not to let my own shortcomings hinder me in my desire to obey the word of God.

This section doesn't have to do with that. This section has to do with men out in the marketplaces and in public places, just parading up and down, praying to be seen of men. It says, when you pray, enter into your closet.

Of course, a closet in Bible times wasn't like where you hang your coat, but it's a room. It was an upper room in the home, and it was a place of privacy where a man could go and carry on his devotion with God, and the promise is that God who is invisible, who sees in secret, will reward you openly. And then the word of God tells us that we're not to use vain repetitions in our prayer life.

Now, vain repetitions mean, well, say, five hour fathers, or something like that, just for the idea that going through a certain ritualistic prayer that God hears you for your much asking. Well, of course, that's ridiculous. In certain sections of the world, they have prayer wheels, and they spin these prayer wheels, and the idea is that the more the prayer wheel goes around, the more God hears it.

Well, how vain and how full of folly such an idea is. Use not vain repetitions, it says, of the heathen do, and that means the Gentiles. Gentile religions have been characterized by that sort of thing.

They think that they'll be heard for their much hearing. It says, don't be like them. What God wants us to do is come to him in simple faith, and just speak to him as a child would speak to his father.

That's the best prayer. That's the best prayer, just coming to God as to a loving, heavenly father, and telling him what is on our heart, making our needs and requests known to him. And then the Lord Jesus gave us this model prayer in verses 9 through 15, commonly known as the Lord's Prayer.

Now, remember, as we go over this, that he has just finished saying, don't use vain repetitions, and I personally don't believe that the Lord intended us just to take this prayer verbatim and use it over and over again. I don't believe he intended us to do that. I don't think it's wrong if you want to do it, but I don't think that was the idea that the Lord had in mind.

I believe this is the model, or the pattern, that our prayers should follow. What is the pattern? Well, it begins, Our Father which art in heaven. What does that mean? Well, it means our prayers should be addressed to God the Father in heaven.

And you know, that's really what prayer is. When I bow on my knees in prayer, by faith, I'm not on the earth any longer. By faith, I enter into the heavenly sanctuary, and I'm in the presence of God, the sovereign of the universe.

That's what prayer is. And I want to tell you, that's no mean privilege. You know, I couldn't go down and see J.F. Kennedy tonight.

I couldn't get into the world's dignitaries. The guards outside would give me a hard time. But it is a wonderful thing to know that at any time of the day or night, I can bow before God, and I can come into his presence in the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's prayer. Our Father which art in heaven. Well, what's the next thing I learned about prayer? Well, I learned that instead of beginning with my own request and what I need, I should begin by ascribing honor, worship, and praise to him.

Hallowed be thy name. And this is exactly right. This would be the Christian approach.

Before thinking about myself and what I need, I should think of all that God has done for me, and so I should begin my prayers with thanksgiving to him, shouldn't I? And praise him for his glorious name and for the gift of his love, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hallowed be thy name. You know, the name in the Bible is always taken for the person, and when you say, Hallowed be thy name, you mean, Hallowed be God, praised be God, worshiped be God.

That's really what it means. Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come. Now, what does that mean? Well, it means after worshiping and praising God, I think of God's interests here on earth, and I put his interests first, because I'm taught that later on in this same chapter, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Now, thy kingdom come, that really means, Lord, I pray for the time when the Lord Jesus Christ will come back and set up his reign here on earth, and when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. That's what it means. You know, this poor old world is in a mess tonight, and Christ isn't where he ought to be.

The Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven tonight, but he shouldn't be in heaven tonight. He should be on earth, reigning where he should be. The Spirit of God is on earth today.

He shouldn't be on earth today. He should be in heaven with God the Father. The presence of the Spirit of God in the world tonight is witness to a rejected Christ.

So, I pray thy kingdom come. I look forward to that glorious day when the Savior himself shall come and set up his worldwide rule, when he shall rule for a thousand years over this earth. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. You see, this is what the child of God longs for. Today we live where the King has been rejected and where man's will is predominant and where the will of God means nothing among the people of this world.

So we pray, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. After that, we introduce our own needs. I take it that this expression, Give us this day our daily bread, is just a short summary that at this point in our prayers we are permitted to come to God and make known our needs.

This expresses our dependence upon him for the very food that we eat. Give us this day our daily bread. It's not only physical food, but we should pray every day for spiritual food, too.

Give us this day our daily bread. I don't think the Lord just intended this to mean the food we eat with our bodies, but also the spiritual food, the word of God, and that he should give us a suited portion each day for our soul. Then it says, And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Oh, you say, that doesn't sound like Christianity, does it? Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. It really does. It's very Christian.

It's very Christian, because in the verses that follow, we learn that if we don't forgive our debtors, how can we expect God to forgive us? Oh, people say to me, but Mr. MacDonald, you forget that forgiveness of sins is through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's true. That's true.

When you come to God in the first place for forgiveness of sins, it has nothing to do with your forgiving others. Nothing to do. But you see, what we must remember in this prayer is that there are different types of forgiveness in the Bible.

When you come to God as a guilty, lost sinner, confess your sins and receive Jesus Christ as Savior, you receive what we call judicial forgiveness. Judicial forgiveness. Your sins are gone, buried in the deep, deep sea.

God will bring them into remembrance no more. But there's another type of forgiveness, and we call that parental forgiveness. Now, you know that in your home when your boy is naughty, you don't sentence him to the electric chair.

That's the judicial act. But you have in your home what you call parental forgiveness, don't you? Well, after you become a child of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you don't need judicial forgiveness anymore. When you sin, God doesn't sentence you to die in hell after you're saved, but you need parental forgiveness after you've sinned.

And God is saying here that if you don't forgive men their debts, how can you expect parental forgiveness from him? In other words, you're not acting like God has acted toward you. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And then it says, It will lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

That's a hard one, isn't it? Would God ever lead anybody into temptation? That's hard, isn't it? Well, you know, although it's hard, and although that's difficult to understand, yet I pray that prayer, and I think I know what it means when I pray it. I think that what we're praying here is that God deliver us from being put to the test. You know, he allowed Job to be put to the test in the Old Testament, told Satan he could do anything but take his life, and poor Job went pretty low.

Well, I'm afraid I wouldn't have the strength and fortitude that Job has, and I say to the Lord, lead us not into temptation. Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil. I think this prayer suggests a sense of my own weakness and my own worthlessness, and that if left to myself for an instant, I can do nothing but fall.

And I think it's a prayer for God's sustaining grace through all the trials and difficulties and temptations of life, and life is filled with them. And so once again, I say that although I might not be able to explain all the theological meanings of a verse like that, yet I can pray that I'm satisfied in my own soul that I know what it means and that God knows what it means to lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen. And your prayer closes again with praise to God and acknowledgement of his supremacy and his sovereignty over all the earth. And then the Lord Jesus goes back to verse 12, and he knew that that one was going to cause us a little difficulty, and he says, For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And once again, we just want to say that that has to do with parental forgiveness and not judicial forgiveness. Judicial forgiveness is completely on the basis of the shed blood of Christ.

Parental forgiveness has to do with our fellowship with God the Father, maintaining fellowship with him, and his dependence to a certain extent on how we treat others. And then he comes thirdly to the subject of fasting, the third kind of righteousness found in the Word of God in this chapter has to do with fasting. Now, does fasting have anything to do with the present dispensation? Well, of course, the Word of God teaches that it does.

It isn't very popular, but fasting means to abstain from food or drink for a period of time in order to give oneself more undistractedly to prayer or to meditation on the Word of God. I think that you all realize that we can think and we can concentrate better. We're more sharp and keen and alert on an empty stomach than we would be on a full one.

And so God has allowed in his word for this matter of fasting. But you know, once again, if you fast and people don't know about it, it kind of robs it of some of this joy. And that's just what the Lord is saying here.

When you fast, don't let anybody know about it. It must be done in private. It must be done in secret.

You know, in the Lord's day when they fasted, the hypocrites would get some ashes and they'd cover their face with ashes, and then they'd turn on the tears and they'd start to wail, and the tears would start flowing down through the ashes. And you can remember, you can just imagine what they looked like by the time they got through. Somebody would come along and say, Boy, that man's really been fasting, hasn't he? But that's just what he wanted them to say.

And so that's what the Lord says here. That's just what the Lord says here. He said, Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance.

And were they ever sad? For they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to bat. I say, Do they have their reward? What does that mean? Well, it means that they wanted men to see them and to acknowledge and to say that passing word, and the men did it. And so they have their reward.

There's nothing in it as far as God is concerned. He says, When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face. Well, anoint your head and wash your face really means just carry on as normal, because those were two of the everyday methods of keeping oneself at that time.

And it means just don't do anything out of the ordinary, just wash your face and carry on as you ordinarily would. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy father, which is in secret. Thy father, which he is in secret, shall reward thee openly.

And so these three illustrations of righteousness to be practiced in secret, bring before us the inward character of true Christianity. It's not doing things to be seen of men. And you know, it'll be a wonderful thing, I think, to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and to, in that day, to see revealed at the throne, all that was done so quietly and so secretly unto him.

And I want to tell you, there's a lot, there's a lot been done by saints right here, and nobody else knows about it, but it's been done and God knows about it, and it's going to be rewarded openly. And that's true Christianity, according to the sermon on that. And then the Lord Jesus comes to the whole subject of, of caring for tomorrow.

And the whole subject of material things. And what he says here is not very popular. And what he says here, I'm sorry to say, is not accepted in most of Christendom today.

And very, very serious, I think. Very, very serious. The Lord Jesus says in this next verse, lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

You know, to lay up treasures on earth is just as, is just as contrary to the word of God as theft or adultery or murder. It is just as contrary to the word. I didn't say it was just as serious, but it's just as contrary to the word as theft or adultery or murder.

To lay up treasures on earth. Now, a clever theologian can give you 60 reasons why the Lord didn't mean what he said here. But I want to tell you, if you want to be a Christian that goes on for the Lord, you take the word of God the way Jesus said it.

Because mark my words, the Lord Jesus knew what he was talking about. And when men get through with verses of scripture today, they've extracted all the milk out of them. There's nothing left.

And I'd like to suggest to you, my dear friends tonight, and this comes from the bottom of my heart. If you come to a verse of scripture that the Lord Jesus said, and it seems difficult or impossible to obey as it's written. Well, that's probably the right explanation probably is.

And when men can take that verse and make it to mean something that an ungodly person could do just as well, that isn't the right interpretation of the verse. Brilliant. The Lord Jesus said, lay not up for

yourselves, treasures on earth.

For moth rusts of corruption, where thieves break through and steal. Now to the Jewish mind, there were various kinds of treasures. And strangely enough, one of the first kinds of treasures, when a Jew thought of treasures, he thought of expensive clothing, Hart, Shatner and Mark and so forth.

And that's where the moth comes in, you know, that's where the moth comes in. And then of course, money, that's where the rust comes in. And then thieves break through and steal.

Well, that's any kind of treasure at all. The Lord says, lay up your treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. So where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

You know, the difficult thing about riches is, it's almost impossible to have them without trusting in them. That's the thing. And what the word of God teaches, and I just like to throw this out for your consideration and your prayerful contemplation.

I believe this with all my heart that what the Bible teaches, and it teaches for every Christian, not just for those who are in full-time work. It teaches that we should work hard and industriously for the supply of our current needs and the needs of our family, and leave the future to God. Now, I don't blame you if that makes you uncomfortable.

It makes me uncomfortable, too, and my flesh doesn't like it. But I believe that's what the Bible teaches. In other words, our lives as Christians should be a perpetual crisis of dependence upon the living God.

It should be. You say, oh, I don't like that. Well, I sympathize with you.

I don't like it, either. That is, naturally speaking, I don't like it. And yet I know that God can't fail.

He can't go back on his promise. Why do I hesitate to trust him? Now, it's enough to drive an unsaved man mad to have no visible means of support. But I'd like to ask you this question tonight.

Wherein do our lives differ from the lives of the unsaved people when we lay up treasures on earth? This is a problem, and this is what the Lord has had dealings with me about. I thought I was living the life of faith, and I look around and I see that I'm just living the same kind of a life as far as financial things as the unsaved man, by a system of clever reserves and so forth. Well, this is very searching, dear friend.

I'd like to suggest again, just for your consideration, that what the Bible teaches is that we should work hard and industriously and zealously for the supply of our current necessities, and everything above that should go into the work of the Lord. Everything above it. I'll probably never get invited back to Durham.

I was telling Brother Jetwater that last summer I was out in California, and one night we were sitting at a table, Stacey Woods and myself, and there was a young couple there. And this young couple, they were working very hard. In fact, I think each of them was holding down two jobs, and they were really raking in the money.

And Stacey Woods, in his own incisive way, said to them, and I thought it was really quite a bombshell, he said, Did you ever get down before the Lord and decide on some standard of living that you would be satisfied with, and then decide that everything above that should go into the work of the Lord, and that if you got a pay increase that your standard of living wouldn't go up accordingly, but that it would just go into

the work of the Lord? That was quite a question. It was really an atomic bomb. You know, God has used that, and there's been a change in that young couple's life.

I've been rather close to them, and it's wonderful how a little question like that could influence the whole direction of people's lives. Now, notice, we must go on. The only thing I don't like about Durham is the way time flies.

It says in verse 22, The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. Well, if you just read that verse and look at it, it almost seems grotesque, a body with one eye.

But that is what it means. It says the lamp of the body, that word light is lamp, the lamp of the body is the eye. What does it mean? Well, it means that all the light your body gets, it gets through the eye.

It's true, too, isn't it? Close your eyes, no light. It says the lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye be single.

Now, single there has a slightly different meaning than we have for it today. It really means they're healthy. If your eye is in good condition.

If your eye be single, your whole body is full of light. But if your eye be evil, that is, if it's diseased or damaged, your body is full of darkness. Now, he says there's a spiritual meaning to this.

There's a spiritual meaning to this. If your eye is single, that means if your motives are pure before God, you're not trying to feather your own nest, but you're trying to live for the glory of God and live sacrificially and devotedly and passionately for him, your whole body will be full of light. What does that mean? It means, dear friends, your life will be flooded with divine illumination.

That's what it means. It means you'll never lack the guidance of the Lord. That's what it means.

The body is taken as a symbol for your life. And if you, if so, the eye of your soul is healthy before God, and you're not trying to live for two worlds at the same time, if you're living for the glory of God and willing to get by on essentials down here, God says your whole life will be flooded with light, with illumination, with guidance to walk the Christian life. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

That is, if your motives are not pure. If you say, yeah, well, I want to serve the Lord, but I want to set aside twenty-five thousand for my old age, too. And your motives are mixed, you know.

Says your body will be full of darkness. You'll wonder, why have I lost the glow? Why am I not getting guidance from the Lord? I don't seem to be enjoying the spiritual warmth I did before. Well, God says, watch out, maybe your eye is diseased.

Maybe your eye has become damaged. And then I think this next expression is most stretching. It says, if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness? What does that mean? Well, I think it means that here's a Christian, and God has given him a certain amount of light on this subject, but he doesn't avail himself of it.

Well, the darkness and the light of a man like that is worse than the darkness and the light of a man who's never known about these things. That's what it means. This is a strange principle in God's dealings with men, that when we reject light, we're given darkness.

And the worst kind of a darkness, here it would mean a Christian who starts off brightly for the Lord. He really is going to go out and give the Lord his very best, and then in creeps the love of filthy lucre. And he hides his light under a bushel, and the old zeal and fire aren't there anymore.

The love of material things has come in. I believe it means that the darkness and a light like that is worse than the darkness in his life before he was saved. It doesn't mean that he's lost his salvation, but boy, he can sure get out of tomb and out of touch under those circumstances.

And so the Lord says, no man can serve two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other, else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Can't serve God and mammon.

And this is the great tragedy today. People try to hold on to both worlds. In fact, there are Christian organizations that will tell you today that if you buy their annuities, let's say, you'll get reward down here, you'll get reward up there, and it's contrary to the word of God.

It's just contrary to the word of God. You can't serve God and mammon. You either love the one and hate the other, or cleave to the one and despise the other.

And so the Lord Jesus says in verse 25, therefore, I say unto you, take no thought. Now what that really means is be not anxious, be not anxious for your life, what you shall eat and what you shall drink, nor yet for your body, what you shall put on is not the life more than meat and the body than raven. Well, this is what we were talking about Sunday morning.

God made us for a higher purpose than to be perpetually worried about food and clothing, more to life than that. And he says, don't spend your life in anxious thoughts for this type of thing. When he says, look at the fowls, the birds of the air, they don't sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly father feeds them.

Aren't you much better than they? Well, that's an interesting thought. The sparrows don't worry about what they're going to eat next winter. You ever think of that? They don't worry about that.

They go out and work like little beavers for what they're going to eat today, but they don't worry about next winter. They trust God for that. That's the thought of the passage.

God is going to be their provider as far as that's concerned. He says, well, if that's true of sparrows, how much more true is it of you? And the idea is that it would be utterly impossible for a man to give himself completely and utterly and wholeheartedly to the Lord and ever lack bread. And then he says, in which of you, by thinking, can add one cubit unto his stature? That's an interesting verse.

You ever try it? You start thinking real hard, you see yourself going up 18 inches, because that's what a cubit is. Well, it's ridiculous, isn't it? A cubit was a distance from the middle finger down to the elbow, about 18 inches. And then it came to me not only your height, but the length of your life, too.

And the Bible says, can you, by worrying, add some height? Well, I think if you could, some sisters would do a lot more worrying, but it doesn't work. It doesn't work. And you can't, by worrying, add years to your life.

It takes a few off, but it won't add any on. But that's what he says here. And why take your thought for rain? Look at those wildflowers out there on the hills.

He says, consider the lilies of the field. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like unto one of them. They don't worry about their clothing, do they? They toil not, neither do they spin.

And yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothed the grass of the field which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? You know, that's a tremendous verse. It shows the passing character of beauty in the world.

You know, there are people that live in the world for beauty. And God says, well, there's a beautiful flower. Today it is, and tomorrow it's cast in the fire.

Beauty of the soul is far more important than any such external beauty. He says, therefore, take no thought saying, what shall we eat or what should we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things are the Gentiles. That is the ungodly.

This is what they live for. Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things, but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. I don't want to come to the end of the journey and find that I've lived my life worrying about things that were included in the price of the ticket.

But that's what this passage of scripture teaches. This passage of scripture teaches that if I seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, it doesn't mean that I'm going to be lazy. Far from it.

If you seek the kingdom of God first and his righteousness, you're going to be diligent in the King's business, and the whole tenor of your life will be the glory of God. But it does teach that if you do that, you'll never lack for food and clothing. All these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. The fish and the day as the evil erupts. It's saying, why worry about tomorrow? Tomorrow will have its troubles.

Tomorrow will have its trials. Tomorrow will have its cares, but don't worry. Tomorrow will have its grace too.

As thy day, so shall thy strength be. Why am I going to worry about the future and what the future holds? You could really work yourself into the lather, couldn't you? I could say, well, yeah, you're able to travel around now and have meetings and you're supportive, but supposing you get older and you're dead fast, who's going to take care of you then? Well, really, I could just be a nervous wreck if I were to worry about those things. God says, you don't have to worry about these things.

You serve me diligently today. You give me all that you have today, and it's all included in the price of the ticket. And so I would suggest to you that the whole argument here in the latter part of this chapter is that anxious thought about the future is unnecessary.

God is going to take care of it. It's not only unnecessary, it's foolish and it doesn't work. It doesn't work.

So may the Lord help us to learn this lesson. It's a difficult lesson. It's contrary to all that we are as men and women in the flesh, and it's a side of the truth that certainly hasn't been emphasized in Christianity.

And yet here it is in the word of God. Please don't be angry with me. I didn't say it.

Jesus said it. He said, lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth. Shall we pray? And then our brother Jones will lead us in a closing hymn.

Father, we confess to thee that we do worry and we do take anxious thought and we think about the future, and we wonder what's going to happen to us and all the rest. Deliver us from it. And Lord, we pray thee that thou deliver us too from making a comfortable nest for ourselves in this scene which gave our Savior nothing but a cross and a grave.

Help us to be always dependent upon thyself and to live in this world as pilgrims and strangers hastening on to our heavenly home. We do ask that in 1001 ways thou will make these truths real and vital and living in our hearts and lives. And then again, we pray that should there be some here who are not saved, that they will realize that these things we've been discussing are not the way of salvation.

You're not saved by living a life like this, but that this is the life that is called for all of those who are saved. We pray that they might understand that this is the fruit and not the root, that these are the results and not the causes. We pray that any such might come simply in faith to the Lord Jesus and crown him Lord of all and receive his sufficiency for such a supernatural life.

We ask you to the Savior's name. Amen.

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