

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

PROGRAM 8 (#912178)

WEEK 2 (912340)

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SERIES: Sermon On The Mount

TITLE: Program 8 – Beware Of Practicing Righteousness Before Men

WEDNESDAY

OPEN

Praying, fasting, giving. These are the disciplines that belong to the disciple of Jesus Christ. Do you know what these disciplines are all about? And when you pray will your prayers be heard? Have you forgiven others from your heart? It's so important to understand what God says about giving, about praying and about fasting and that's what we're going to look at today as we continue our studies in the Sermon on the Mount.

PART ONE

As Jesus taught His disciples on that Mount of Beatitudes I'm sure in His mind's eye that He came back to Jerusalem. That He came back to those times when He would come up to this holy city with His father to celebrate the feasts. They would come up 3 times a year at the Feast of Passover or Pesach. They would come up again at Pentecost or Shavuot and they would come up a third time to the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles to Succot and

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there I'm sure in His mind's eye He would remember the sites and the things that He saw as men would go out of the synagogues and stand on the street corners and sound a trumpet in order to call the poor to give them their alms or as they would stand on street corners and raise their hands in prayer or as they would come out in a sense disheveled and unwashed and unclean so that men might see that they were fasting. And so Jesus expresses concern for His people. Concern for those that are followers of Jesus Christ because there's always a temptation to practice our righteousnesses in order to be seen not only of God but to be seen of men, to be appreciated by men. And so in Matthew chapter 6 (Verse 1) He says, "Beware...." this is His caution. This is His concern. "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who's in heaven." Once again He's mentioning a reward because as you and I know everybody that is part of the body of Jesus Christ, everybody that is a true follower of Jesus Christ does not necessarily live that to the fullest. In the parable of the sower of the seed, we know that the seed fell on good ground but some only brought forth a 30 fold harvest, others only 60 fold and others only a 100 fold. And so He's not questioning their salvation here but He's saying I want to caution you. Don't do this to be seen of men. He says, (Matthew 6:2) "When you give alms," and we are to give. In 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 He's talking about giving as a ministry and you know when I look at Jews that practice their religion I have never seen people more generous towards the poor. But His warning here is look, don't go out and sound that trumpet in front of the synagogue and call the poor and then dispense the money and do it in order to be seen of men. He knows the danger of our heart. He knows the pull of our flesh. And so He says when you do that you want a reward from men. You'll get your reward in full. From alms giving He then goes to prayer and He says, (Matthew 6:5) "...when you pray, don't be like the hypocrites for they love to stand and pray in the synagogue and on street corners, in order to be seen of men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full." He says, (Matthew 6:6) "But when you pray, go into your inner room, and shut your door, and pray

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to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” This is what it’s all about. It’s all about God and not about men and you and I need to be careful. When Jesus comes to practicing righteousness in regard to prayer He wants to make us understand that there’s not just one issue in regard to prayer that He’s concerned about. He’s also concerned that when we pray that we don’t use meaningless repetition like the Gentiles who do not know God. Listen to what He says. (Matthew 6:7-8) “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you have need of, before you ask Him.” You say, “Well if He knows that I have need then why do I even bother to ask?” Because prayer strengthens your relationship with God. Prayer shows your poverty of spirit. Prayer shows your total dependence upon God. Prayer builds that relationship between the Father and the child because prayer is communication. So now what He’s going to do is He’s going to say when you pray, pray in this way. Well those of you that are studying with me in depth know that the Lord’s Prayer is what we call it is a way to pray. It’s a list of index sentences or topical sentences that were used as cues to remind you of the different aspects of prayer. Now I’m not going to go over all of those because there’s a book that I’ve written and it’s called Lord, Teach Me To Pray in 28 Days and it’s an in-depth study on the Lord’s Prayer and that book has sold way over a 100 thousand because people find it so valuable in just learning to pray in this way. But let’s just go through the Lord’s Prayer rather quickly. He says when you pray, pray in this way. (Matthew 6:9) “Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed by Thy name.” In other words in your prayer start with worship. Focus on God. Focus on who He is. Focus on His name because His name reveals His character. And then He says, (Matthew 6:10) Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done....” Here we show my allegiance is to your kingdom. Now what is the Sermon on the Mount all about? The Sermon on the Mount is all about those who belong to the kingdom of heaven whose righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. So right now we’re in that

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portion of the Sermon on the Mount where He's sharing His concerns regarding their practices of righteousness. So He's reminding them that our allegiance is to the kingdom. Thy kingdom come. They will be done. Now Thy will be done again is an act of submission. It's saying, "God, I know that you're sovereign. I know that I can trust you. I know that you're over all and so God, I'm just telling you that I want to align my desires and my purposes and my life not with my way but with your way. Because your way is so much higher than my way and your way is so much better than my way and your way is perfect and my way is full of human frailty." And then it comes down to (Matthew 6:11) "Give us this day our daily bread." So here's a petition. God, I'm asking You to supply my needs. Now watch what He says. "Give us this day our daily bread." So many times we wonder where intercession is in the Lord's Prayer but we notice that they're plural pronouns our and us. And so here we're not just praying for our own daily needs. And we're going to see, as we study the second part of this chapter, that God supplies our daily needs and we don't need to take concern for tomorrow because today has enough troubles of its own. So just go to God day by day in that childlike dependence. Well then it goes on to say, (Matthew 6:12) "And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors." Now watch the word forgive. The word forgive means to send away. And He's saying, "Send away our debts. I owe You absolute righteousness. I have failed, God, to pay that debt of absolute righteousness and I am asking You to forgive my debt where I have failed You as I have forgiven others. Now in this prayer what Jesus is showing us is that You and I as children of the most high God, as sons of God, as children of the kingdom, as those that are merciful, as those that are peacemakers, that You and I are obligated because we're followers of Jesus Christ to forgive others even as God has forgiven us." And so, now we're saying, "God, will You forgive me as I have forgiven others?" Now just stop and think with me for a minute. What is the kingdom of heaven made up of? It's made up of sinners who have been forgiven by God. It's made up of sinners who under the new covenant have total and absolute and complete forgiveness of sins simply

because of grace, simply because of mercy. Now grace is unmerited favor. So it's not something that you earn. Mercy is seeing someone, seeing their great need, having pity on them and being moved with compassion, to help them in that need. If you study Matthew chapter 18 and you go to the parable that Jesus tells in order to answer the question of Peter when he says Lord, how often should I forgive? He says I want to tell you a story and he tells a story of a man that was forgiven by his master of a horrendous impossible debt that he would never be able to repay. And that forgiven man went away with his debt, out of mercy, out of grace, totally cancelled. And then he came to a man that owed him a pittance in comparison to what had been forgiven him. And that man, he says, "You pay me," and that man falls down and says, "I'm going to try hard and I'm going to pay you, "Just be patient with me and I'll do it." And yet that man that had been forgiven so much was not the least bit patient. And it says in Matthew chapter 18, (Verse 30) "He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he could pay back all that was owed." And, (Matthew 18:31-32) "So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and they came and they reported it to their lord all that had happened. Then, "summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave,' now listen, "I forgave you all that debt simply because you entreated me." Simply because you asked me. (Matthew 18:33) "Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?" Well he has more to say about forgiveness of sins, and we'll be right back.

PART TWO

Now listen. (Matthew 18:35) The Lord was moved with anger and turned him over to the torturers until he could repay all that was owed him. He says, (Matthew 18:35) "So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart." What is He saying here? He is saying the same thing that He says in Matthew chapter 6 if you'll go back there. Jesus says forgive as we have forgiven our debtors. That's the way

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that you are to pray. That's one of those topical sentences because you have to remember that if you're going to have your prayers answered you have to be right with God and remember, you're to be right with men. Remember in Matthew chapter 5 He says if you know that your brother has something against you, you leave your offering there at the altar and you go be right with your brother and then come back and make your offering. Remember the Sermon on the Mount, Beloved, is all about a righteousness, a personal righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. It's a righteousness that is a hallmark, an identifier of every single child of God. So forgiveness is very important. Then He goes on to say this. He says in verse 13, finishing the Lord's Prayer. And He says, (Matthew 6:13a) "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil." In other words God, I'm showing You what my heart is. Don't lead me into a trial. Don't lead me into a testing. Don't lead me into a temptation that I can't handle. God, I'm telling You I want to be everything that You want me to be. And I want You to keep me from evil. Keep me from the evil one. And then in some manuscripts this is added and some it's not, (Matthew 6:13b) "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever." And it says, "Amen." Now He says in verse 14, He wants to go back to forgiveness because forgiveness is so key. And I want you to see this and understand this. I think that many of us are making meaningful repetitions in our prayers and we are not seeing our prayers answered because our heart is not right before God and before men because we have not forgiven. Now there's a whole study to be done on forgiveness but listen to what He says because it goes right in context with Matthew chapter 18. He says, (Matthew 6:14-15) "...if you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive them, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." What is He saying? He's saying it is imperative, Beloved, for you to forgive. Why? Because you are a son of God. (Matthew 5:9) "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God." (Matthew 5:8) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And listen, if you have this bitterness, if you have this

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unforgiveness it gets closer, and closer, and closer to your eyes so that you cannot see anything else. You cannot see God. Now, He turns to the third discipline that He wants to talk about and it's fasting. In (Matthew 6) verse 16 He says, "And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen to be fasting by men. Truly I say to you," and for the third time He says it, "they have their reward in full." Now we're living in times where we have become more aware of fasting because of the extremity of this situations in our world and in our country and in our nation and so Christians have been called by God to fast. Now he's not talking about corporate behavior. He's not talking about corporate alms giving. He's not talking about corporate prayer. He's not talking about corporate fasting. And what I want you to see is this. It's about personal behavior. That's why in Matthew chapter 5 He says if somebody slaps you on the cheek you turn the other cheek. He's not saying to a nation if an enemy comes against you, you just let the enemy take you. You've got to understand that this is an individual message. It's to you. It's to me. And so now He talks about fasting. And I think of the three disciplines that fasting is probably one that we do the least because it's the hardest. Because it requires getting away and it requires shutting up yourself. It requires saying no and it's hard for us to say no especially to the appetites of our body. And yet if you did the homework, if you got this course and I pray that if you haven't gotten it that you will get it and that you will go back and do what you've studied in Matthew chapter 5 and that you would just go through this again. Or that you would get the book Lord, Only You Can Change Me or the one that follows that, that deals with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. Why? Because those books will take you deeper than I can take you in a 30 minute program. And you need to understand these disciplines. He says, (Matthew 6:17-18) "But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you." You know as we studied all the scriptures on fasting, we saw that the purpose of fasting is for us to humble ourselves before the Lord. It's

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for us to bring ourselves low before the Lord. It is for us to cry out to God on matters that are of great concern to us either personal matters or matters in regard to others. You see in 2 Samuel chapter 1, in verse 12 David fasted because he was in sorrow because Jonathan, his covenant partner, had died in battle and Saul, his king, had died in battle and so he fasted. You see him fasting in 2 Samuel chapter 12 when the child that he has had by Bathsheba is ill and he's beseeching God because he wants that child to live and yet God does not let that child live. So fasting does not always get us what we want. I remember one day when I was fasting about a particular family situation and as I was fasting I was thinking about the way one of the people in our family was treating another person and I was mad at them. I mean I was really, really mad at them and I was fasting because of this and as I was sitting there and fasting because of this I just decided I think I'll treat you the way you're treating that person and then you'll see what it's like. Now listen. I was fasting! My heart's desire to fast was right but my attitude sure was wrong and God just spoke to me because I was fasting and because I was seeking His face and He showed me my heart. And He showed me that my heart was wrong. So fasting is making yourself right before God it's making sure that you're in that position that God wants you in and it's that continual, poverty of spirit not leaning to the flesh but trusting in God. Well, Precious One, there's so much more about fasting but there's one other thing that I want to share with you. David fasted for an enemy. In Psalm 35, verse 13 one of his enemies was sick. An enemy that desired to destroy him and yet what did David do? He fasted. Precious One, these are disciplines. These are righteous acts that we need to perform. We need to give. We need to pray and we need to fast. But we need to do it God's way and then when we do we can know that He who sees in secret will reward us fully.