

**Matthew in Biblical Perspective:
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King –
The Sixth Commandment: Do Not Be a Hypocrite, Part 2**

Matthew 6:5-18

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

August 29, 2010 – Morning Sermon

We continue in our study on the Sermon on the Mount looking at the seventh commandment given by our Lord teaching us how to use the Law given to us on Mount Sinai, with the Gospel. Let's look at this introductory verse to this section on the Sermon on the Mount. We will be covering Matthew 6:5-18 in this study but I want to give you the introductory again. Matthew 6:1 says 1 *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 6:5-18 says*

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 7 "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. 16 "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The grass withers and the flower fades. God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

I'd like to take a closer look at Matthew 6:1. Jesus had six of His sermons that He preached recorded in the Scripture and this was the first one which is called the Sermon on the Mount and covers Matthew 5, 6, and 7. In it He tells us of the transforming power that we just confessed in the beatitudes of how He changes, blesses and saves us. He gives us our Gospel ministry of salt and light. Then He tells us God is going to be glorified with the way we live and the way we speak. He says, "I have given you a perfect righteousness. I have cleansed you of your sins. Now I want your righteousness to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees." So how does the Gospel that saves us take the Law of God which instructs us into an exceeding righteousness?

He gave five commandments and we've already studied those. He showed us how Law of life is much more than just don't murder. He showed us how the Law of marriage is much more than just don't commit adultery. We looked at the enjoyment of Biblical sexuality within marriage, faithfulness to one another, giving the picture of the relationship of Christ with His bride. He has shown us about truth and how we're not to take personal vengeance but minister to others. There's a place for courts to do their works but we don't set up our own courts. On the contrary we reach out to those who have violated us with the love, mercy and grace of Christ. He draws out with these five commandments this exceeding righteousness but then in Matthew 6 He now turns to a second tablet of five commandments. These five commandments say that now I have given you the idea of how the Gospel uses the Law for you to live a life of exceeding righteousness, this isn't what you do to be saved but this is what you do for your Savior who has given you His perfect righteousness and here's how you do it.

Then He makes this interesting statement in Matthew 6:1. He says, "*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them ...*" There are a couple of things here that are kind of interesting. One might be thinking, "Harry, He's talking to hypocrites who don't know Jesus." No, He's talking to people who know Jesus who from time to time live as hypocrites. How do I know He's talking to believers? Not hypocrites using religion to play the part but He's talking to Christians who periodically fall into hypocrisy. Remember what hypocrisy is? It's a term from the Greek theater meaning to put up a mask to play a part. Jesus is saying "When you know Me you don't put up a mask to play a part but you live from a changed heart."

Periodically My people can fall back because you have that old man in you where you can fall back into that way of hypocrisy in certain situations that is living for the audience of men and their applause which is playing the part, instead of living from the heart to the Father who gave His Son to save you."

How do I know for sure He is speaking to Christians? He says to those who are practicing their righteousness to be seen by others, "You have no reward from **your** Father who is in heaven." Who is He speaking to? He is speaking to believers, people who have God as their Father through His Son as their Savior. He is also saying that in our life we have eternal life, the gift of heaven, but as we live our life when we go before the Father there is this thing called rewards that He will give us that we're actually going to use to give back praise to Him. But He says some of you are not getting those rewards that you could be granted to give Me praise in eternity because you didn't live the life for Me. You lived a life here for yourself and so you received the rewards from men and so you won't get a reward from Me. So He is speaking to believers here and how we can easily fall into the trap.

There is one more thing about this. This is really a challenge because He told us back in Matthew 5:16 that when you're salt and light I want you to live in such a way that men and women will see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. So He wants us to live in such a way that people will see our good works that is our exceeding righteousness and as a result glorify God who is heaven. Now go to Matthew 6:1 where it says "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men." So do You want them to see my righteousness or not? Yes, I want them to see your righteousness but I don't want them to see you. I want them to see Me in you. I want you to learn how to live for Me so that people don't see you but they see what I'm doing through you and then they're drawn to Me and My Son who I gave to save people like them, just as I saved you. Now that's the challenge. So it's not to say I'm now a Christian so I'm going to live my life privately so I won't be a hypocrite. You are not allowed to live privately as a Christian, you have to go public but you don't go public so that people see you. You go public so that they see Him in you and glorify Him and are drawn to Him.

So how do I get there? In the last study we looked at this and sometimes Christians in doing mercy fall into the way of hypocrisy and call attention to themselves through how much mercy and giving they are doing. Jesus doesn't want us like that. They hypocrites sound the trumpets, have a parade and say "Watch me do mercy ministry." Jesus says "You be merciful just like your Father has been merciful to you. You have known My mercy that has come to you now I want you to go out where your joy and your greatest reward is that the Father has been honored in your mercy ministry, needs have been met in His Name and people have been pointed to Him."

What about prayer and fasting? So now we are seventh commandment at the Sermon on the Mount. How do you practice the Gospel righteousness of prayer and fasting? Jesus does the same thing here that He does with mercy. He says "Let Me tell you how not to do it." Let's look in Matthew 6:5-15 which says

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they

may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 7 "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Here is this call that has been given to us to pray because He says "When you pray..." but He also gives a warning not to pray like the hypocrites. How did the hypocrites pray? The hypocrites take their private devotions and go public with it so that people will see them pray. They love to pray to be seen by others. That's an unrewarded prayer life. In a sense it's not unrewarded because they do get their reward when people see them and probably say something like "Oh my goodness, I noticed your praying. You're such a wonderful, religious person." So there is their reward. You get to be called on in praying in public because everybody knows you like to pray in public, maybe. Jesus says I don't want you like that. He says you're prayer life certainly will be public but I want you're prayer life to be predominately private. Go to your secret closet and pray. I don't want you to be like the hypocrites that pray to be seen by others. I want you to be like My children who come and talk to the Father. I want you to love to draw apart in the quietness of the secret closet, call upon Me for I'm your Father.

By the way, don't be like the pagans. You mean people that don't know the living God and have a relationship with Him, they pray? Yes they pray. The Bible doesn't tell you to pray because you do pray. Everybody prays. The question isn't do you pray. I have heard atheists pray. Watch them hit their hand with a hammer and see what comes out of their mouth next. It's not a really good prayer but it's a prayer. We pray. We will pray. The question isn't do you pray but the question is how do you pray, what do you pray and why do you pray? So when you pray, pray this way. There is the secret closet where you talk to your Father and then He gives us this marvelous statement of the Lord's Prayer. Pray this way. The unrewarded prayer life is the prayer life that is to be seen by men or the prayer life of a pagan. What is the prayer life of a pagan? It's superstitious. If I say enough, say it fast, say a lot then maybe my words will get it done. The hypocrite promotes himself in prayer and the pagan relies upon himself in prayer. Maybe if I say enough words then it will happen. It's pure superstition. He says, "You're not heard because of your many words but because of the integrity and content of your words. So pray this way. You don't pray to be seen but your

prayer life is predominantly unseen in the secret closet with God Himself as your Father.”

He says the same thing about fasting. Let’s look at that next part of the text. Matthew 6:16-18 says *16 “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.* Others who fast it’s a superstitious act which is like their prayer life which is a superstitious act or it’s a self promoting act where they want to be seen by others. They think maybe their fasting will earn something or they think they will get applause from people if everybody knows they are fasting. Just this last week from one of my brothers in the PCA I got a website link where he’s fasting and having it publicized. It’s in direct opposition to this. Is there a place for a church wide corporate fast? Absolutely, but my personal fasting like isn’t to be announced. When I fast personally people ought not to know it. It says anoint yourself and wash your face so when they see you the last thing they think of is your fasting much less you promoting yourself saying “Look I’m fasting, see how holy I am.”

The rewarded prayer and fasting is one that is done in secret before the Father and He rewards in the intimacy of the relationship with Him. The unrewarded already have their reward because people saw you, whether it was prayer or fasting to be seen by men.

The Lord’s Prayer is an interesting prayer. About two years ago I did a series on the Lord’s Prayer. So you can go to the Briarwood website and download eight sermons on the Lord’s Prayer which I don’t have time to go over in this study. But let me just work through it a little bit so let’s look at it for a moment. Why do we call it the Lord’s Prayer? It’s really the disciples’ prayer in a sense because He is responding to the statement from the disciples, Lord teach us to pray. Notice that Jesus knows they are going to pray for He says “I want you to learn how to pray, pray this way.”

Matthew 6:9-13 says *9 Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread, 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Then the early church very quickly when they began to pray that prayer took a doxology from the book of Daniel and put it right on the end of it that said “For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.” Now what is that prayer doing? Notice how this prayer starts off with an amazing statement in an economy of words. God is transcendent and glorious when it says “Our Father in heaven.” He is high and lifted up. But then notice the intimacy not only the awe of the high and lifted up God, but Our Father, Abba Father that we may with an

endearment call Him our Father. Do you know how profound that was? Go try and find that in the Old Testament. In the New Testament God has now taught us I have sent My Son that you My sons and daughters might now call upon Me with reverence, I'm in heaven, but I'm also with you by the Holy Spirit. So you may call Me Father.

Then comes six requests in which three are vertical and three are horizontal. The vertical ones precede the horizontal. The first vertical one is 'hallowed by thy Name' in which we want God to be lifted up and honored. The second vertical one is 'thy Kingdom come' in which we want to spread the rule and reign of King Jesus throughout all the world and by the way we want the King back. Thy Kingdom come means King come back that promised second coming of Christ. The third vertical request is 'thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' in which we want Your Word revealed. We want it to be done on earth just like it is in heaven. Now work those backwards. How does God's Name get hallowed? It is when His Kingdom and the rule and reign of God's grace and the King Jesus Christ takes hold of our life. How does that happen? It happens when God's will takes hold of our life. So God's will as we conform to it brings us to acknowledge the King which causes us to hallow and give glory to His Name.

Now that relationship is going in the right direction now we're ready to start praying horizontally. The first one is 'give us this day our daily bread.' The phrase daily bread is an interesting phrase. In fact this is the only time the word daily is used in the New Testament. It's a tough one to translate. I think the word daily is the best translation but let me give you another translation so you get the sense of it – 'give us this day our *necessary* bread.' I want Your Name to be hallowed. I want King Jesus to be exalted. I want Your will to be done. While I'm in this body I need You to give me what I need this day to do that. Give me this day for I am dependent on You to give me that. One might say "Harry just go plant some seeds." Let me repeat, I am dependent upon Him to make those things grow and then the strength to go harvest them and the ability to partake of them and then for Him to use that in the health of my body. Give us this day our daily bread. By the way, man shall not live by bread alone. I need You.

Forgive me of my debts which is the second horizontal one. I have incurred a debt against You. The wages of sin is death. I've got an eternal debt where I am under Your wrath and judgment. I am a sinner and I can't get rid of that debt. I have a debt I can't pay. O God, I need Your grace to pay my debt. Just to declare that I know I'm a debtor and I need forgiveness, I want you to know something. I'm going to forgive others who have sinned against me. Those little temporal debts are done. Those people who have gossiped against me or cut me out of deal, I turn them over to the Lord. I forgive them because I have been forgiven of a far bigger debt. So I willingly desire to do that.

Father, I have one more request (the third horizontal one). Don't let the snares of Satan get me which is the request of 'lead me not into temptation, deliver me

from evil and the evil one.' Now Thine is the glory and the power and the Kingdom forever, Amen. It is of You and from You. By the way, notice one other thing in that prayer. The first three requests are God-ward. The next three requests that are man-ward are intercessory. It doesn't say give me my groceries. It says give us our daily bread. It doesn't just say forgive me of my sins but forgive us our trespasses. There is an intercession that is built into the prayer life as well as an adoration of God and as well as a confession of sin. There is an intercession for others. I live in the family. I want them to be cared for, loved, secured and redeemed.

I have three takeaways for you as we would practice this Gospel prayer and fasting in our life. Here is one thought as I give you these. Have you noticed that whether it was mercy, giving, prayer or fasting that everything keeps coming back to God our Father? This is family living. The whole key to the Christian life is your view of God and your relationship with God. In your view of God is He glorious and worthy of your all in all and is He sufficient to take care of your all in all? Is He your Father where you know Him as your Lord and Savior? That affects your giving, your mercy giving, your prayer, your fasting, everything in your life of what your view of God is and your relationship with Him in and through Jesus Christ. So what does that look like in prayer and fasting when I know who God is and I know my relationship with Him where I have been saved by grace?

Here is the first of the three takeaways. The intercessory prayer and the intentional fasting like the ministry of mercy is not a consideration but an expectation in the Christian life. Did you see how many times in the text it said not if you pray but when you pray, not if you fast but when you fast? It is expected. Did you know fasting is never commanded in the Bible but one time? There are all kinds of commandments for feasts in the Bible but only one commandment for a fast on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Fasting was used, modeled, and encouraged by the Lord but it was never commanded but one time. Yet now our Lord doesn't say 'if you fast' but He says 'when you fast.' He expects it to be apart of our life in relationship to our prayer life. So like mercy giving that we studied it is not a consideration but it is an expectation.

So how do I make it apart of my life? We all know how to do this, don't we? Who is your Savior? This isn't a trick. It is Jesus. Let's go back for a minute. Did Jesus pray? Yes. Did He fast? Yes. Did He engage in public fast? Yes, He did it five times. Five times He affirmed and encouraged in the Gospels and the Day of Atonement was one of the public fasts but where was the depth of His fasting? Remember the forty days and forty nights in the wilderness? It was in secret. Did Jesus pray publically? Absolutely but where was the predominance of His prayer life? It was in a garden, on a mountain, early in the morning, late at night, in secret speaking to His Father. What we want to build in our life is the predominance of prayer and fasting in the personal secret arena of life that we love to go talk with our Father.

Why is fasting there? I understand it's not commanded and expected but what does fasting do? This deserves a lot more treatment but here are a few things to remember. Number one, fasting is declaring humility. I am humbling myself before God. I'm getting in the right place. You're God and I'm not. I repent of all these times I thought I was. Secondly, fasting always accompanied confession of sin. Thirdly, fasting was an act that was done in concert with prayer. Prayer and fasting go together and Word by the way. Prayer, Word and fasting all go together. So instead of sitting down to a pork chop, I sit down with the Bible and read it, eat of it, and pray. This isn't giving something up so God will love me. It's that I'm disconnecting even from the necessities of life in order to focus in on what is life and that is my relationship with You. It's not making an act of atonement. It is saying even though I can eat and drink to Your glory I'm going to set aside food, drink and feasting I could do, to fast because I don't want anything to come between us. I could give you the physiological blessings of when the blood leaves your stomach and goes to your head but the whole point of this is not to punish ourselves so God will love us but the whole point of fasting is to draw apart from those things that could become idolatrous to focus upon Him with a single-mindedness to draw close to Him. So fasting and prayer become apart of our life. Just like Jesus we want the secret fasting and prayer to predominate. Yes we will participate in a church wide fast. Yes we'll participate in public prayer but what we want predominate is the root system of the closet of prayer and while I've anointed my face in public I've set aside things to draw closer to Him in my life in fasting.

The second takeaway is the Lord's Prayer is a model for the Christian prayer life because it is a model for the Christian life. The reason it's the disciple's prayer is it models the Christian life. What is the Christian life? What does the Lord's Prayer start with? It starts with the worship of God – hallowed by Thy Name. Then what does it move to? It moves to the rule of God as my King and Shepherd – Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, in my life. Then where does it go? It goes to the providence of God where we say God sustain me because I need Your forgiveness, I need daily bread, I don't rest in my own labor for I rest in You. I am utterly dependent on Your providence. So the Lord's Prayer just models the Christian life which is why it is a model for our prayer life. It is the worship of God. It is commitment to the Kingdom of God. I want Jesus Christ to be my King, not any other king in this world. I want the King to come back – Thy Kingdom come. Come quickly Lord Jesus. Lord, while I'm serving You I'm utterly dependent upon You and Your providence in my life. God, most of all I need Your grace. Forgive me of my sins – lead me not into temptation but deliver me from the evil one. I need Your grace that is greater than all of my sin in my life. That's what I need in my life.

So there's the worship of God, the Kingdom of God, the providence of God, the grace of God and then finally the witness for God. If I want to serve You and honor You through the forgiveness that You have supplied for me in Jesus Christ

then Father I want to be that witness to others. I'll forgive them. I want Your grace to be seen in me and through me. I want to be a witness for God. Allow me to be a witness for You O God. It's okay and right for us to use the Lord's Prayer occasionally in repetition for worship but it was designed to be used every day, every moment, in life.

Thirdly and finally, is a word about forgiveness. Matthew 6:14-15 says *14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Notice again that He's your Father. This isn't that you lose your salvation if you don't forgive people. You lose your intimacy with the Father. Why is He saying this? Is He saying if you forgive others that earns your salvation and your forgiveness? No, we have already been taught in the Bible for by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of work lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). So my forgiving others doesn't get my forgiveness. So what is He saying? He is saying that your forgiveness of others is a declaration of the integrity of your confession and repentance and desire for God to forgive you. If you want Him to forgive you it will be manifested by your willingness to forgive others. It is a statement of integrity.

Secondly, it is a mark of you having known forgiveness as a son. Have you been forgiven of your debts by Jesus? In Christ you have because there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. I had a debt I couldn't pay - hell, the judgment of God. Jesus came and paid the debt I couldn't pay. Jesus paid the debt He didn't owe so I could be forgiven of the debt I couldn't pay. Then what is it for me to forgive somebody else their debts against me? So they gossiped about me. I forgive you. So they undercut me. I forgive you. I now give you to the Father, His judgment not mine, who has forgiven me all of my sins and who has sent His Son not into the world but to hell for me. His Son on the cross suspended between heaven and earth met the holiness of God out of love to me then I desire to forgive you. My friends, we love to talk about the blessings of being the sons of God to call God our Father. We have been adopted and we're in His family. Isn't it wonderful? But there are also the responsibilities of sonship and our forgiving of others is one of the indelible marks that God is your Father and you're forgiven in His Son Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Prayer:

If you are reading this and you don't know Jesus Christ can I tell you where this all begins? You don't have to fast, you're allowed but you don't have to, and there is a prayer for you today. O God, be my Father, be merciful to me for I'm a sinner. I put my trust in Your Son Jesus Christ. Father, we will pray. Let us not fall into the superstition of paganism and let us not fall into the self promotion of hypocrisy. May we pray and talk to our Father in the predominance of our secret

prayer life, accompanied from time to time with fasting as You lead us that we might draw close to You. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Father, thank You for these moments, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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