

2/1/26

Sermon Title: Authentic Faith

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 6:1-18

Giving to the Needy

⁶ “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

⁵ “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ “This, then, is how you should pray:

““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 today 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 the evil one.

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Fasting

¹⁶ “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,

¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

This chapter is the core chapter of the Sermon on the Mount.

It contains the essential teachings of the Christian life and presents a practical theology centered on God.

First, it emphasizes the vertical relationship between God and humanity, teaching that all religious practices must flow from pure motives directed toward God.

Second, through the Lord’s Prayer, it addresses the core themes of Christian theology: God’s sovereignty, the coming of God’s kingdom, the provision of daily bread, the forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from temptation.

Third, it emphasizes trust in God’s providential care.

In this chapter, Jesus teaches His disciples about a godly life as citizens of the kingdom of God.

From the proper attitude toward giving, prayer, and fasting, to the meaning of the Lord's Prayer, the perspective on material possessions that God's people should hold, and a life that seeks God's kingdom, Jesus provides concrete guidance for the everyday faith of Christians.

Jesus teaches the right attitude toward giving, prayer, and fasting, emphasizing that these spiritual practices are not to be performed to be seen by others, but are to be offered solely to God.

Through the Lord's Prayer in particular, He teaches the proper way to pray and exhorts His followers to break free from daily worries and anxieties and to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

He warns against materialistic values, teaches the importance of storing up treasures in heaven, and presents the principle that no one can serve two masters. Finally, regarding everyday concerns such as food, clothing, and shelter, He calls His disciples to trust in God's provision.

In this chapter, the passage focuses on Jesus' teaching about giving, prayer, and fasting.

Through these practices, Jesus teaches His disciples what it means to live a righteous and truly godly life before God.

Jesus specifically addressed these three practices because, at the time, religious leaders were using them as religious acts to gain recognition for righteousness and piety from people rather than from God.

Doing righteous deeds is commendable, but Jesus teaches that actions performed in a showy way to receive praise from others have already received their reward from people and therefore will not receive a reward from God.

¹ "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

A life of piety practiced to be seen by others is hypocrisy.

True godliness focuses on the heavenly Father, who rewards the righteous.

The teaching on giving to the needy

Giving to the needy is a practical act that those who believe in God ought to practice.

However, there were several problems with the Jews' practice of giving.

They sought recognition and praise from others for their good deeds, and as a result, they failed to consider the dignity and situation of those who received their charity.

Jesus teaches that when we give to the needy, we should do so in secret, so that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

² “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

At that time, when giving to the needy began in the temple, a trumpet was sounded.

This was intended to inform those in need so that no one would miss out on receiving help.

However, over time, contrary to its original purpose, those who gave began to use the blowing of the trumpet as a means to display their own righteousness to others.

Such hypocritical acts of charity are evil deeds that exploit the poor in order to gain personal glory.

Jesus calls such people “hypocrites.”

The Greek word *hypokritēs* originally referred to an actor in the theater who wore a mask, and it came to describe a person whose outward appearance differs from what is inside.

Jesus teaches, “Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” when you give.

This means that one should even avoid the pride of considering one’s own pious acts as righteousness.

He teaches that God, who sees what is done in secret, will reward us.

In doing so, Jesus emphasizes that a righteous life before God ultimately receives true reward and recognition.

The teaching on prayer

Prayer is communion with God.

Nevertheless, the Jewish religious leaders were more conscious of people than of God when they prayed.

They prayed standing in synagogues or at busy street corners in order to be seen by others.

Jesus instructs His disciples that when they pray, they should go into their room, close the door, and pray in secret.

He teaches them to focus their prayers solely on God, who is unseen.

⁵ “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

He teaches that God responds to prayers offered in secret and in sincerity.

He also warns not to keep on babbling like the pagans.

That is, we are not to mutter repetitious words as if chanting spells to idols or spirits.

⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Jesus presents a model of prayer so that His disciples may pray rightly.

This is the Lord's Prayer.

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray:

"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 today 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 the evil one.

The Lord's Prayer is divided into prayers concerning God and His kingdom, and prayers for the needs of His children.

The first three petitions are prayers concerning God and His kingdom.

First, it is a prayer that God's name may be hallowed.

Second, it is a prayer for God's kingdom to come, expressing a desire for the expansion of God's reign.

Third, it is a prayer that God's will may be done on earth.

A disciple is to pray through obedience that not his or her own will, but God's will, may be carried out on earth.

The next three petitions are prayers for the needs of His children.

Fourth, it is a prayer for daily bread—that is, for the basic necessities of life in this world.

Fifth, it is a prayer for the forgiveness of sins.

Sixth, it is a prayer that acknowledges our weakness and our inability to withstand Satan without the Lord's help, asking that we may not fall into temptation or be led into evil.

When we pray in this way, we will avoid selfish prayers or hypocritical prayers meant to be seen by others.

Since the Lord's Prayer includes a petition for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus emphasizes this point once again.

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

This repeated emphasis shows how difficult forgiveness is in human relationships.

The teaching on fasting

Fasting is the act of denying physical desires and laying everything before God in order to express one's earnest heart to Him.

The Jews fasted as an entire nation once a year on the Day of Atonement.

In addition, the Pharisees fasted every Monday and Thursday in commemoration of Moses' forty-day fast on Mount Sinai.

However, in Jesus' time, people deliberately made themselves look disheveled while fasting in order to display their piety.

They marked themselves as fasting so that others would notice and admire their devotion.

In this way, they turned the beautiful act of fasting offered to God into a means of religious pride and self-promotion.

Jesus warns against such hypocrisy and instead instructs that when you fast, you should put oil on your head and wash your face.

This is so that your fasting may be seen only by God, who is unseen.

¹⁶ "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,

¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Originally, in the Old Testament, fasting was accompanied by wearing sackcloth and putting ashes on oneself.

It was a sign of humbling oneself before God and expressing repentance.

However, Jesus instead instructs His followers to put oil on their heads and wash their faces.

He despised the use of fasting as a means of self-display and pride.

Fasting is a form of prayer in which one refrains from food, focuses solely on God, lays down one's own will, and seeks the fulfillment of God's will.

How hypocritical it is to fast while being more concerned with people's attention and praise than with God Himself.

If we fast while focusing only on God, who sees in secret, God will reward us.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,

Through today's passage, Jesus teaches how the people of God are to pursue a "better righteousness" and live a godly life.

Through giving, prayer, and fasting, He clearly reveals what true piety looks like for the citizens of the kingdom of God.

True godliness is not faith practiced to be seen by others.

The moment we seek human praise, the reward ends there.

However, faith offered before God, who sees in secret, will surely be answered with heavenly reward.

What Jesus requires is not more religious activity, but purer motives, deeper hearts, and more genuine relationships.

Giving must be an act of devotion offered to God, prayer must be communion with God, and fasting must be an act of laying down our own will and entrusting ourselves to God's will.

Yet we are weak and easily become conscious of others' eyes, turning even our faith into a means of building our own righteousness.

Today, Jesus invites us beyond the Law to a "better righteousness"—a life that stands before God in love and truth.

Let us choose a faith that seeks to please God rather than to be recognized by people.

May you and I live as citizens of the kingdom of God, walking daily in the path of true godliness, fixing our eyes only on God who sees in secret.

I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ.