



# The Narrow Way

#4

*- The Sermon on the Mount -*

From the Pulpit Ministry of Christ E Free Church of Saegertown

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# “The Narrow Way”

## Part 4



The Sermon on the Mount, taken from the words of Jesus

Matthew chapters 5-7

"Enter by the narrow gate..."

Matthew 7:13a

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## “The Narrow Way”

“You have heard it said...” –Mat.5:21

“But I say to you...” – Mat.24:22

At no time is Jesus devaluing the Law or discounting our Old Testament. When He makes these statements, He is (1) addressing issues where the religious leaders may have been supporting or keeping that particular command, but still sinning in some other way related to that command. (such as: Anger & Murder). (2) Or he was addressing a misunderstanding of a particular law and a misrepresentation of God’s perspective on an issue, law or sin. (such as: Divorce & Remarriage) (3) Or He was addressing and correcting something they were teaching and presenting as the Law of God, when in reality it was the ideas of men which had been allowed to seep into the Jewish religious culture and considered and promoted as Law. (such as: Love your neighbor & Hate your enemies)

Jesus never abolished the law, relaxed the commandments nor condoned the religious leaders inappropriate handling of God’s Holy Word, the Law. He did clarify, correct and demonstrated that the Law was actually tougher to keep than we had previously thought.

**SERIES:** SERMON ON THE MOUNT: "The Narrow Way" Sept.27, 2020

**Sermon Title:** "Promises Promises"

**Subj:** Divorce & Remarriage

**TEXT:** Mat. 5:33-37

**REVIEW: THE LAW OF:** The Law of God establishes God' standard of Righteousness , to which the whole world will be held accountable.

**REVIEW:**

**Mat 5:17-32 ESV (17) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (18) For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (19) Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (20) For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.**

**Mat.5:31-32 (31) "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' (32) But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.**

**Mat 5:33-37 ESV (33) "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' (34) But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, (35) or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. (36) And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. (37) Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.**

The Law establishes the Standares of Gods' righteousness.

The Law exalts the Essense of God's Holiness

The Law illuminates our own personal unrighteousness.

The Law celebrates and magnifies the grace of God and drives us to seek righteousness outside of ourselves.

The Law is not something we can Live up to, but is that which we will be measured by.

**Rom 3:10, 20** (ESV) as it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; (20) For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

**1) The Law of God communicates how things in God's Kingdom of Heaven operate and how we, as citizens of that Kingdom, are to live and conduct ourselves.**

**2) And the Law declares the authority of God, as the King of that Kingdom.**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

As we continue through the Sermon on the Mount and this section of the Law; This is specifically pertaining to the swearing of an oath and taking of a vow. It is important to realize that if and when we take an oath, we are dealing with things and situations that we have no ultimate control over. We may have good intentions of carrying it out, but we are not in full control of the future or of the events around us.

**Pro 20:24** ESV A man's steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way?

Taking an oath implies we are in control and we are setting out to accomplish our own plan and purpose. But if we surrender our intent and plans to God; it indicates we are dependent upon Him and trusting Him, as we are submitting all our plans over to His Lordship, to evaluate, and even to change or redirect, as HE sees fit, according to His plane and His purpose.

Today's lesson from Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount is focused on the swearing of oaths and taking vows.

*First we will consider...*

**SWEARING AND THE VOW OF MARRIAGE** (Mat.5:33-37)

Last two weeks we looked at God's Law that addresses Divorce, which God described as an act of violence and unfaithfulness toward the spouse of your covenant. Covenant being a solemn agreement, promise or a vow.

From the Jewish Tanakh

**Mal 2:14-16** JPS (14) ... the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt **treacherously**, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. (15) And not one hath done so who had exuberance of spirit! For what seeketh the one? a seed given of God. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal **treacherously** against the wife of his youth. (16) For I hate putting away, saith the LORD, the God of Israel, and him that covereth his garment with **violence**, saith the LORD of hosts; therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not **treacherously**.

The breaking of the marriage vow was described as Treachery, and an act of violence. And from the breaking of the covenant of Marriage through Divorce (Mat.5:31-32), Jesus now speaks directly about the Swearing of Oaths and breaking vows.

*This was directed to the Jewish people, 2,000 yrs ago.*

**The Jewish People**

\* Jesus is not speaking about swearing, as in cursing; but in swearing an oath or taking a vow to, seemingly intensify a promise or agreement, in order to make it more binding, more believable or more certain.

**Mat 5:33-37** ESV (33) "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' (34) But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, (35) or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. (36) And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. (37) Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil. [cp. Mat.23:20-22]



For the early Jewish people, a “covenant” was intended to be an unbreakable agreement between 2 or more people and not just in the context of marriage. And it was a blood covenant. An animal was killed and the dead bleeding carcass was cut completely in two; and the two parties would walk through, or between those two pieces of dead animals,

Scholars are divided on the original meaning; either referring to “cutting”, as in cutting an animal in two, or it meant “Binding”; which is what was being symbolized as the two parties passed between the two halves, thus being bound together as one, in an agreement, or alliance.

**Dr Thomas Constable:** God has always intended simple truthfulness in speech as well as lifelong marriage. The rabbis had developed an elaborate system of oaths. They taught that swearing by God's name was binding, but swearing by heaven and earth was not binding. Swearing toward Jerusalem was binding, but swearing by Jerusalem was not. In some cases they even tried to deceive others by appealing to various authorities in their oaths. [

Swearing an oath was an attempt to emphasize the weighty matter of an agreement, and to persuade others to take them at their word.

*What about oaths in our cultures?*

## **In America**

In marriages today, I often wonder, if these people who are being married and are repeating their vows have ever really stopped to consider the depth and weight of their words. It is a swearing of an oath, with all of Heaven as a witness.

*Perhaps most traditional weddings say something to the effect of:*

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, take thee, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wedded wife//husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, <sup>1</sup>for better, for worse, <sup>2</sup>for richer, for poorer, <sup>3</sup>in sickness and in health, <sup>4</sup>to love, honor and to cherish, <sup>5</sup>till death do us part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto <sup>6</sup>I pledge thee my faith."

<sup>1</sup>for better, for worse: We are usually counting on the “better” outweighing the “worse”. Bob Moeller of “The Marriage Minute”, used to say, “For better, for worse, **for Keeps**”.

<sup>2</sup>for richer, for poorer: that is throughout financial trials and blessings.

<sup>3</sup>in sickness and in health: In caring for your spouse or being cared for by your spouse, its all a part of this lifelong commitment.

<sup>4</sup>to love, honor and to cherish: At every stage, and in every circumstance.

<sup>5</sup>till death do us part: there is the intended duration.

<sup>6</sup>**I pledge thee my faith.** – I think many getting married, tend to think of that more like the “pledge of allegiance”, where one is just stating out loud they are marrying, rather than viewing it as the swearing an oath, and entering into a covenant with your spouse to be.

**(i.) Cowboys and Hillbillies** – I’m not a cowboy but,..... I do have some distant relatives who may have been hillbillies. But Cowboys and Hillbillies were known to strike up a deal and would spit in their own hands and then shake hands on the deal. And nasty as it was, it was intended to imply; “this is a binding agreement, that neither one of us will ever go back on.”

**(i.) The Red Man**, at least as they were depicted in the old Westerns– would take a knife and cut their hands or arms, so that blood was drawn. And then they would rub that bleeding area together with the other one, in order to seal an agreement. It was a serious pact, through which they became “blood brothers”.

It seems that all cultures have their traditions that attempt to emphasize promises or make agreements seem more binding.

## TO SWEAR AN OATH IN GENERAL

**Mat 5:34-37** ESV (34) But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, (35) or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. (36) And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair

white or black. (37) Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

## Oaths In Jewish Life

**Deu 23:23 KJV** That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, **which thou hast promised with thy mouth.**

In this passage, breaking a vow seems to be equated with lying, which would be breaking the 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment.

**Lev 19:12 KJV** And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou **profane the name of thy God**; I am the LORD.

Here in Lev.19, swearing falsely or breaking a vow, is mentioned as profaning the name of the Lord, which would be a violation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment. Do not take the name of the Lord in vain.

To God, an Oath, or promise or a vow was serious business. God's promises are His word and we call it a promise.

## An Oath In a court of law today

Used to, you'd Put your hand on top of the Bible, and "swear to tell the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, so help you God". And if it was discovered that you lied under oath; it was the crime of ***perjury***.

*Some places have taken God out of the oath.*

**Heb 6:16 ESV** For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.

An Oath, is swearing by something greater than either person who is making the oath. The idea is there was an indisputable witness of God Almighty, in their midst, who was an unseen but present witnesses. It was the One upon whose name they swore by, whom they were to be held accountable.

There is a witness higher than the one who swears to which all parties are accountable. It is a bit ironic to me, that having taken God's name out of that oath – then what good is the oath? When God is removed

from that, then there is nothing or no one greater to swear by to whom one might be held accountable.

What is the motivation to keep the oath, if accountability to God, the Almighty witness, is removed?

## **We are familiar with oaths In Everyday Life**

\* Growing up we learned how to take oaths and make promises.

### **(i.) Superstitions:**

\*As **KIDS:** we learned how to take an oath. There was the “Pinkie Promise” where two people locked their pinkie fingers and made a promise, indicating it to be something that would last forever.

“Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye.” That made your promise really binding. It made others think you really meant business and that you would never break that promise, no matter what.

But not only did we learn to take an oath, we also learned how to break an oath and lie our way out of it. “Ha Ha. I had my Fingers crossed.”. And then they’d laugh at you for not having any more sense, than to believe them.

It wasn’t funny if you were on the receiving end of it. It taught that you could not believe, or trust the person who said such things.

And then we grow up... and sometimes those things stuck with us. Some never grow out of that kind of disregard for honesty and trustworthiness. We learned how to fake a promise because we knew how to break a promise. Growing up had a way of training us to be more deceptive and lessen the value of a promise.

*Why do we swear?*

### **(ii.) Gives emphasis to our claims or promises**

**(1) \* “I swear on my mother’s grave”:** What does that even mean?

**(2) “I swear to God:** It profanes the name of the Lord and is so common, it is irreverent.

\* Some feel that adds validity to the promise and makes them more believable. But mostly it is just one more way to dishonor God and to

Use His name in vain. People say that and don't even mean to swear.

**(3) As in a court of Law, if we swear by "God"**, it is God who may hold us accountable for those seemingly "harmless" oaths.

**(4) Attempting to make our "word" more believable**, because, perhaps our word often isn't believable.

*What is Jesus getting at, for us Today?*

## **WHAT DO WE MAKE OF THIS LESSON?**

**Mat 5:37** ESV (37) Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

### **God wants our word to be our character**

\* As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we need not take an oath to make our word believable. We need not make a vow in order to cause others to believe whether or not what we say is true.

**v.37)** "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No';

"Are you going to do what you said?" Simply Yes. NOT "I swear I will." But simply and honestly, "Yes". Or "No". Our single word should be as believable as an oath. When a man was trustworthy, people used to say: "His word is His Bond."

It meant that the person's simple word, was believable, and could be counted on."

### **Is your word, believable, just as your word?**

*In the book of James, the words of Jesus are quoted.*

**Jas 5:12** ESV But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, **but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no**, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

That's something worth working on. For the Child of God there should be no difference between an Oath, or a vow or swearing and a simple, "yes" or "no". "His Word is His BOND".

Honorable is the woman or the man or the young person – whose word is their bond. Blessed is the person whose word, expresses their inner

most character and trust-worthiness.

For the child of God, and a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, there should be no need to swear an oath, so as to make our word really binding, as if otherwise, we couldn't be trusted. Gods Kingdom of Heaven is Truth. Therefore those of us who are citizens of that Eternal kingdom; our words should always be yes, no, and always Truth. In so speaking, we are showing just a hint of what God's Kingdom will be like in it's fullness; nothing but truth and no need for Swearing or oath taking. Simply and honestly speaking Truth in faithfulness.

**Ecc 5:4-6** ESV When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. (5) It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. (6) Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake.

### **CONCLUSION:**

- 1) **Proverbs 25:14** A person who promises a gift but doesn't give it is like clouds and wind that bring no rain. We should seek to be men or women of our word. A good reputation is dependent upon whether or not people can take you at your word and believe what you say.

Don't be someone who talks big or a lot, but whose words are empty and meaningless.

- 2) **Ecclesiastes 5:2** Don't make rash promises, and don't be hasty in bringing matters before God. After all, God is in heaven, and you are here on earth. So let your words be few.

Don't be quick to make rash promises you may not be able to keep.

**Jas 4:13-15** ESV (13) Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"-- (14) yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. (15) Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

**“If the Lord Wills...”** “Yes, I am planning on it” “I hope to be there”. “If the Lord Wills it...” Let our “yes”, be “YES!”. And Let our “no”, be NO!. Just that simple. Just that honorable. Just that Trustworthy.

Remember, an oath implies we are in control and are assured that we can make it happen. WE are not. “If the Lord Wills it”, indicates that we acknowledge God is in control and that we have submitted and surrendered the outcome of our plans and commitments to Him. Let our yes, be YES. Let our no, be NO. And may all our words, speech, promises or intent of the heart reflect the character of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom of Heaven.

**Psalm 15** (NLT) A psalm of David. <sup>1</sup> Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? <sup>2</sup> Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts. <sup>3</sup> Those who refuse to gossip, or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends. <sup>4</sup> Those who despise flagrant sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the LORD, and keep their promises even when it hurts.

**SERIES:** SERMON ON THE MOUNT: "The Narrow Way"

Oct.4, 2020

**Sermon Title:** "Law, Order & Justice"

**TEXT:** Mat. 5:38-42

**REVIEW: THE LAW OF:**

**Acknowledge:** The Law is God's Standard of Righteousness.

**To Be Determined:** How can this FOUNDATION OF THE OT LAW, point me toward **God's Greater Grace**, through the FULFILLMENT of MY NT FAITH, **in Christ's Redeeming Remedy?**

**Mat 5:38-42 MKJV** (38) **You have heard that it was said,** "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." (39) **But I say to you,** Do not resist evil. But whoever shall strike you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (40) And to him desiring to sue you, and to take away your tunic, let him have your coat also. (41) And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. (42) Give to him who asks of you, and you shall not turn away from him who would borrow from you.

**REVIEW:**

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**\* The Law is not something we can live up to, but is that which we will be measured by and held accountable to.**

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- 1)** The OT Law is the Foundation for our NT and the NT is the Fulfillment for our OT Foundation.
- 2)** The OT Law of God *presents* God's dealings with His people. Through it, we understand how things are intended to operate in God's Kingdom of Heaven and how we are to live as citizens of that Kingdom.
- 3)** The OT Law *establishes* the Standard of God's Righteousness and declares the absolute authority of God, as King of His eternal Kingdom.
- 4)** The OT Law *exalts* the Essence of God's holiness.
- 5)** The OT Law of God *illuminates* the unrighteousness of mankind.
- 6)** The OT Law *convicts* us of our need of a Savior and converts the heart
- 7)** The Law of God *directs* us to the coming Messiah.
- 8)** The OT Law is our *instruction* for worshipping God and gaining Wisdom for every area of human life.



9) The OT Law *anticipates* God's calendar for the future, and reminds us of our past.

10) The OT Law celebrates and magnifies the grace of God and drives us to humbly and gratefully, seek righteousness outside of ourselves.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

When you hear "Law and Order and Justice", what comes to your mind? a TV program? The Wild west with sheriffs and gunfighters? Maybe you think of the challenges we are facing today in our nation.

"Law and Order" may cause us to think of the state of unrest in many of our larger cities. "Justice" may refer to moral justice, social justice, racial justice, economic justice or political justice. "Justice" is a little like "evangelical". It gets tagged onto just about everything, so that it kind of loses its clear meaning and winds up meaning nothing, really.

Today's lesson from Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount is focused on ***God's Grace being Greater, through Christ's Redeeming Remedy.*** And Jesus directs our focus toward.. **"LAW, ORDER & JUSTICE:"**

**"Law"** is the Standard of right and wrong that all people are held accountable to, not just a few.

**"Order"** is what is experienced when no offenses have occurred, because the law has been kept.

**"Crime"** is what takes place when someone breaks the standard.

So **"Order"** is **also** the orderly, appropriate and fair manner in which broken laws are addressed and amends are made between offended parties.

**"Justice"** therefore, is the overall process of upholding the law, keeping order and the balancing of the two, in a manner which renders fair and equitable treatment of all people. I used to like to watch "America's Most Wanted", with John Walsh. They would highlight an unsolved case with a dramatization to let us see what they think

happened. Then they would invite those watching the show to call into their HotLine if they had any leads or could give any clues on the case. Then at the end of the program they would give an update on one of the shows and the crime that was solved, and the bad guy that was caught, because some viewer called in with information. I loved that kind of resolution where the bad guy got caught. That was justice.

How you view justice, may depend on which side of the law you are on; whether you are the offender or the offended. If you are the one offended you may be quick to demand justice and make it harsh. Or if you are the offender, you may hope for justice to be carried out with much mercy and grace.

If we had no Law, there can be no such thing as a crime of offense, nor can there be any such thing as justice. Both Order and Justice are dependent upon a shared standard of laws.

NO Laws! Or Anarchy, may sound great to some. They can walk up to your house and take your things off your porch or drive away in your car and you might yell, “You can’t do that. That’s against the Law.” Then the Anarchist thief, yells, “Oh yes we can. Because we did away with the law. We have declared “there are no laws.” Then - that becomes the new law – that there are no laws.

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**Their law, being “no Law”, which becomes the “new law”.**

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And that works great as long as you, as the Anarchist - or are on the receiving end of that lawlessness. But once someone comes to your house, and walks away with your things – it becomes a different story. Then you go to his house and take back his stuff and what he took from you and also, just to teach him a lesson, you torch his house.

Law is broken or a person is offended; then in return a person may force the person to pay for what they’ve done, but instead of matching what they did to you, you bump it up and it escalates. And then restitution turns into revenge, with a stiffer and much harsher consequences. Someone breaks the windows of your house. Then you retaliate by

breaking their windows and torching their house. And before you know it: a war is born. BTW, that would be a sign of strained neighborly relations.

## JESUS GIVES US A TIMELY LESSON ON JUSTICE THAT WE ALL NEED TO LEARN.

\* In His Sermon on the Mount, and the character of the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus raises the issue of the OT Law and the topic of “Justice.”

**Mat 5:38-42 MKJV** **(38) You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."** **(39) But I say to you, Do not resist evil.** But whoever shall strike you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. **(40)** And to him desiring to sue you, and to take away your tunic, let him have your coat also. **(41)** And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. **(42)** Give to him who asks of you, and you shall not turn away from him who would borrow from you.

The Letter of the OT Law or the Foundation of the Law is eye for an eye.... Justice. The Spirit of the OT Law or the NT Fulfillment is Grace – But I say to you.... be gracious. Well-meaning Restitution for offenses, can too easily turn into opportunities for personal, hateful Revenge. And what God meant for good, the devil can use for evil, if we allow him to. One way to end a war is for one side to stop retaliating and offer forgiveness.

### **Justice: Treat others as they have treated you.**

Does that sound right to you? In that case, justice would not be served, but more likely revenge will be taken, and likely more severely that it was given. If Justice is carried out individually, we would tend to cause things to escalate. So true justice is based on cultural standards, enforced by the larger “system”, rather than the person or individual offended

The Golden Rule

**Mat 7:12 ESV** "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

We might call that the **Gracious Golden Rule**. This is a principle that, if we learned it and lived by it; has the capability of changing the entire world. The Golden Rule is how individuals are to treat one another.

Restitution & Revenge:

### **Justice and treatment that matched the crime/sin**

**Mat 5:38-42** MKJV (38) You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

**Lev 24:18-20** ESV (18) Whoever takes an animal's life shall make it good, life for life. (19) If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, (20) fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him.

An eye for an eye, is people getting treated the way they treated you, **The Restitution is intended to match the offense**. Biblically it was intended to amount to a returning of the property or action toward the person offended. It was based on restitution or payment. And the punishment was to match the crime.

At first it seems that a person could conceivably break a law and steal something and possibly get away with it. And if he didn't get away with it, he only had to pay it back if he got caught. No big risk because you just might get away with it.

But according to the chapter as a whole, this interchange is to be public. This was to prohibit personal law enforcement or vengeance, or from progressing from restitution and becoming personal revenge.

So this justice was to be carried out before the judges, before the people, before family and friends and the community. If someone blasphemed the name of the Lord, the entire congregation was to stone him. If one took the life of another, the congregation of Israelites took the life of the killer. This was not mob mentality, but the law being enforced by the community and not the individual.

If a man injured his neighbor, the people of Israel were the court and they would return the treatment to the person who injured his neighbor. If a man broke the bone of another man, if someone put out someone's eye or knocked out a tooth,- whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him; and done so by those in the camp, or the congregation of the people of Israel. Based on the standard of the law, justice was carried out by the community and not by the individual who had initially been offended.

It was public and it was meant to keep the Restitution of Justice, from becoming Personal Revenge.

This was the letter of the Law. This was the FOUNDATION of the OT Law, and how justice carried out the balancing of Law and Order

But Jesus didn't come to proclaim the Law or to abolish the Law but to FULFILL the Law. Jesus shares the Spirit of the Law.

*This is the timely lesson of justice that we all need to learn.*

## **LET GOD'S GRACE BE GREATER THAN THE OFFENSE**

***God's Grace being Greater, through Christ's Redeeming Remedy.***

And he calls to the church, to rise to the challenge of not being so quick to demand justice, but to consider being gracious, as Christ was gracious. As Jesus hung crucified on the cross, perfectly righteous and perfectly sinless of his own doings; HE didn't hang there and pray, "Father... Let 'em have it. Both barrels. Give them double portion of what they have given me." "Its clobbering time!"

Instead he prayed; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." That was not a demand for justice but a plea for mercy on behalf of those who, unjustly, had just nailed Him to a cross.

## **Allow the Grace of God to direct you**

**Mat 5:38-42 MKJV (38) You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." (39) But I say to you, Do not resist evil. But whoever shall strike you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.** (40) And to him desiring to sue you, and to take away your

tunic, let him have your coat also. (41) And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. (42) Give to him who asks of you, and you shall not turn away from him who would borrow from you.

But I say to you, Do Not resist the evil one. Literally it means: not to oppose an evil person or to refrain from engaging an evil, angry, violent person. Don't contend with an evil, angry or violent person on their level, but be gracious. That means no "Steven Segal, Jean Claude Van Damm, Johnny Rambo, or Josie Wales."

\* This goes against all that is within a person. The knee jerk reaction might be to immediately respond by hitting the person who hit you. That would be personal justice but no proper Biblical justice. Or insulting the person who insulted you, or belittling the person who belittled you. As Christians, it seems like "verbal justice" is pretty much condoned as acceptable "verbal" eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth – or insult for insult. This would be a recipe for a brawl, or even fighting with our words.

What is a child of God and a citizen of the kingdom of heaven to do in this situation? In Scripture we are told that as Jesus was insulted, he did not return the insult. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. (1Pet.2:23) Instead Jesus "continued entrusting himself to Him who judges justly."

## Be gracious

\* Be Meek; Be Slow to anger. Be restrained from personal retaliation or escalation.

**Mat 5:38-42 MKJV (38) *You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."* (39) *But I say to you, Do not resist evil. But whoever shall strike you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*** (40) And to him desiring to sue you, and to take away your tunic, let him have your coat also. (41) And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. (42) Give to him who asks of you, and you shall not turn away from him who would borrow from you.

Jesus was full of "grace and Truth", emphasis today on the "grace".

"Turn the other cheek" or be so characterized by Jesus Christ that we

don't engage in the violence; that we don't pursue to repay; that we don't seek personal retribution and violence.

How many of us could do that? Who has that within themselves to act in such a manner? How should we act? Justice and Restitution? Maybe.

Revenge? Never! Gracious? Always!

**Rom 12:17** ESV Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

To "Turn the other cheek", is about being gracious and "going the extra mile." Going above and beyond the call of duty, in the name of Jesus, for the sake of the Kingdom and for the Glory of God.

If we have problems with this, I'd like to encourage us to meditate on:

**Rom 12:18-21** ESV (18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (19) Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (20) To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." )

**Prov.25:21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Finish this statement: "If your enemy hungers \_\_\_\_\_." In wartime, we'd probably say, "If your enemy hungers, let him starve!" That's what war is about isn't it? Defeating the enemy" right?

But if we are becoming like Christ we would say; "If your enemy hungers, feed him." Be gracious to her. Perhaps do what it would take in order to be at peace with the one whom you perceive as an enemy. Be Gracious, helpful, even encouraging. If she is hungry, then feed her.

## BE GENEROUS

\* George Sweeting used to say: "Never squelch a generous impulse".

**What is a law suit, but perhaps someone seeking justice?**

**Mat 5:38-42 MKJV** (38) **You have heard that it was said,** "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." (39) **But I say to you,** Do not resist evil. But whoever shall strike you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (40) **And to him desiring to sue you, and to take away your tunic, let him have your coat also.** (41) And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. (42) Give to him who asks of you, and you shall not turn away from him who would borrow from you.

What if we were more inclined to be peacemakers than to take someone to court? What if we gave good things to our enemies? What if we were kind and Kind, Gracious and Generous.?? What if we sacrificed and took the loss, rather than to have the name of our Lord Jesus be dishonored because of our actions?

### **Gracious and Generous:**

Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called Sons of God.(Mat.5:9)

How valuable is being a peacemaker to you? What is it worth to you? (v.40) Coat, is the inner garment, like a sweater; Cloak is the outer garment, more like an overcoat.

The character of Christ and of His kingdom, is peace and "Peacemakers". Blessed are the peacemakers, because they reflect the character of our Lord Jesus and His eternal home in glory- ours, as well.

Hey, it doesn't get any easier. The next one just keeps getting harder.

If you can avoid legal proceedings by attempting to work things out outside of court, it would be of benefit to all and a testimony of the King of the kingdom of heaven as the Ruler of our hearts.

### **Notice the progression Jesus presents**

\* From withstanding, to actively helping.

**Mat 5:38-42 MKJV** (38) **You have heard that it was said,** "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." (39) **But I say to you,** Do not resist evil. But whoever shall **STRIKE** you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (40) **And to him desiring to SUE you, and to take away your tunic, let him have your coat also.** (41) **And whoever shall COMPEL**



**you to go a mile, go with him two. (42) Give to him who ASKS of you, and you shall not turn away from him who would borrow from you.**

We tend to want to give people more harsh justice than what they may deserve. That is due to our fallen flesh nature that is still alive and well within each of us. But what if we were to practice being more gracious than justice oriented? What would we lose and what might be gained? What if we were more gracious toward our offenders than they deserved? What if we demonstrated the character of Christ and His kingdom, leaving them with a taste of the kingdom of heaven and perhaps a longing for it in its fullness.

What if we showed others what Jesus is really like?

**(i.) Gracious to Generous (v.**

It seems these scenarios become less and less adversarial. Less forceful action taken, gives way to more compassionate position. Strike (v39); Sue (v40); Compel (v41); **Asks (v42)**: From meekness, self-Control, not resisting, to gracious, to generous, enduring unreasonable demands with a servants spirit.

**About v.41, Albert Barnes makes this observation**: this may be an allusion, probably, to the practice of the Romans and some Eastern nations, who, when government dispatches had to be forwarded, obliged the people not only to furnish horses and carriages, but to give personal attendance, often at great inconvenience, when required. But the thing here demanded is **a readiness to submit to unreasonable demands** of whatever kind, rather than raise quarrels, with all the evils resulting from them. What follows is a beautiful extension of this precept.

**(ii.) Generous to compassionate (v42**

**Mat 5:41-42 MKJV** (41) And whoever shall COMPEL you to go a mile, go with him two. **(42) Give to him who ASKS of you, and you shall not turn away from him who would borrow from you.**

**Pro 19:17** ESV Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.

**Psa 37:21** ESV The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives;

**Pro 3:27** ESV Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

## **CONCLUSION:**

From the Letter to the Spirit of the Law. From the OT Foundation, to the NT Fulfillment – how are we to live?

**Q:** How can this FOUNDATION OF THE LAW, point me toward **God's Greater Grace**, through the FULFILLMENT of MY FAITH, **in Christ's Redeeming Remedy**?

**(1) Invite God to lessen our grip on the things of this world - to nurture a less possessive attitude** toward earthly things that the Lord has provided; so that we see all that God has given us as tools and means to help others experience the grace and compassion of God's kingdom. . Giving, helping, Serving. All are ways we can help others experience a taste of the Kingdom of heaven on earth.

**(2) Invite God to nurture A Meek spirit and slow to retaliate;** This is an unusual trait for any human to possess. To display an interest and a willingness to help others in any area of need. To demonstrate a love for heavenly treasures rather than an addition to earthly pleasures and possessions, is evidence that someone other than self, is in control.

**(3) Seek to cultivate A caring and generous heart can be a testimony to others** of a caring and generous God. If someone asks you for a ride to the store. Ask them if could pick them up again sometime. "You need \$20 for groceries? Are you sure that will be enough? How about \$40 worth just to be sure you and your family have enough?

It seems in our culture, we are only willing to do what is absolutely needed and no more. I have other things to do. My time is valuable. My

hard earned money is for me.

**(4) Pray God will open our eyes and hearts Anytime we have opportunity to demonstrate the character of Christ** and of His

kingdom – we can't go wrong with that; provided we have that kind of character developed already.

Perhaps we should begin working on that, by first praying; “Oh God, make me more like my Lord Jesus; Lord nurture in me, the kind of person that can fulfill these challenges we learned today. For your kingdom sake.”

Help me to be genuinely just, but also to be more gracious and more generous in my dealings with others, especially toward those who are oppositional to me.

**SERIES:** SERMON ON THE MOUNT: "The Narrow Way"

**Oct.11, 2020**

**Sermon Title:** "Love from Above, pt.1"

**TEXT:** Mat. 5:43-48

**REVIEW: THE LAW OF:**

**To Be Determined:** How can this FOUNDATION OF THE OT LAW, point me toward **God's Greater Grace**, through the FULFILLMENT of MY NT FAITH, **in Christ's Redeeming Remedy**?

**REVIEW:** The Law is not something we can live up to, but is that which we will be measured by, and held accountable to.

- 1) The OT Law is the Foundation for our NT and the NT is the Fulfillment for our OT Foundation.
- 2) The OT Law of God *presents* God's dealings with His people. Through it, we understand how things are intended to operate in God's Kingdom of Heaven and how we are to live as citizens of that Kingdom.
- 3) The OT Law *establishes* the Standard of God's Righteousness and declares the absolute authority of God, as King of His eternal Kingdom.
- 4) The OT Law *exalts* the Essence of God's holiness.
- 5) The OT Law of God *illuminates* the unrighteousness of mankind.
- 6) The OT Law *convicts* us of our need of a Savior.
- 7) The Law of God *directs* us to the coming Messiah.
- 8) The OT Law is our *instruction* for worshipping God and gaining Wisdom for every area of human life.
- 9) The OT Law *anticipates* God's calendar for the future, and reminds us of our past.
- 10) The OT Law celebrates and magnifies the grace of God and drives us to humbly and gratefully, seek righteousness outside of ourselves.

**Mat 5:38-48** ESV "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' (39) But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (40) And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. (41) And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (42) Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

**(43)** "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' (44) But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (45) so that you may be sons of your Father

who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (46) For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (47) And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? (48) You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

## INTRODUCTION

I find it interesting that so much of this particular portion of the Sermon on the Mount, specifically focuses on human relations. Have you noticed that? This particular passage deals with how we view or treat our “enemies”. The last section focused on how we treat others, to whom we might wish to carry out personal revenge. Before this, Jesus focused on how our actions and the breaking of our marriage vows, affects our spouse. Before that it was lust and adultery, obviously affecting others. And before that, Jesus addressed the sin of anger toward others that is worthy of the same judgment as murder. Before that it was about people who take advantage of us and use us. All connected in various ways to how we react, relate or retaliate toward those around us.

## THE LAW OF LOVE & HATE?

(5:43-45)

This Section of persecution has a close lingering connection to the previous section on Justice and an eye for an eye in verses 5:38-42.

### The Law of Love & Hate (v43)

**Mat 5:43-44 ESV (43) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" (44) But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...**

\* Most humans don't have much problem fulfilling this law. Most of us are good at loving those who love us, and hating those who we perceive as our enemies. That is the natural, human way. If not hate, then at least treating them disrespectfully; especially in the area of politics and elections, there are those we may love to hate.

Many read this and think, “something about that just doesn't sound

right.” And that would be correct. If you notice, as Jesus takes us through the Sermon on the Mount, He doesn’t actually say; “The OT Law states...”. But he states: “You have heard it said...” And with these statements Jesus addresses, anger, adultery, Divorce and many others that He doesn’t take time to address every one: -- these statements represent issues that are based on the OT Law of God, but have become twisted, perverted, misunderstood and misrepresented – from the religious leaders, to the people of God, who are dependent upon those religious leaders to understand and pass on to them. The Word, Law and Will of God is addressed and clarified in the Sermon on the Mount.

This Law Jesus refers to is where we get the 2<sup>nd</sup> Greatest Commandment, to Love you neighbor. And for the record the “Law” does not instruct hatred toward one’s enemies.

**Lev 19:15-18** ESV "You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. (16) You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. (17) "You shall not hate your brother in your heart,<sup>[Mat.5:22]</sup> but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. (18) You shall not take vengeance<sup>[Mat.5:38]</sup> or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

So the part of loving your neighbor, they got right. But where they get “Hate your enemies”, is anybody’s guess.

## **The Law and Assumptions. (5:43)**

Love neighbor and hate your enemy?? Hard to find where the religious leaders would have come up with that one. Several commentaries tell us that it became a teaching which was assumed; “Love your neighbor, which was accurate. They then concluded or assumed, then you should hate your enemies, which was unbiblical, but certainly caught on.

The OT Law of God deals largely with relations. How to treat one another when problems arise. And the OT Law is where the Greatest and 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandments originate.

**Mat 5:43-44** ESV (43) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' (44) **But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...**

So Jesus states: *"You have heard it said..."* referring to the misuse and misrepresentation of Holy Scripture, from the heart and mind of God, given to His people. With which he then follows with this statement: *"But I say to you..."*; basically stating, "Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Allow me to clear some things up for you..."

The correct perspective on how we treat our enemies is also lined out in part in the OT Law.

**Exo 23:4-5** ESV (4) "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. (5) If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

These acts or treatments of an enemy is the demonstration of God's love, even in the Old Testament. In a sense we are instructed to treat our enemies according to the Golden Rule. Treat them as you would want your enemies to treat you. So the Law of Love and Hate may appeal to our fleshly nature, but it is certainly not Biblical and certainly not commanded.

*Following this, Jesus addresses...*

## **OUR IDENTITY AS CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN** (5:44-45)

**Mat 5:43-44** ESV (43) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' (44) **But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...**

Loving your enemy displays the character of Christ and His Kingdom of Heaven. (5:44) It also is a visual declaration of the OT Law of God. Here Jesus gives correction to the whole "Law of Love and Hate".

**(i.) Jesus instructs us to Love our enemy (v44)**

Bless those who curse you. do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who mistreat or persecute you. You want to mess with somebody's mind; when someone is really mean or hateful or condescending or insulting; Compliment them. Point out something impressive about them.

If we need more understanding of how to love someone according to God's love, 1 Cor. 13:1-8 would be a good place to go to find out what Love really looks like. Kindness. Patience. Its being gracious, merciful, understanding and forgiving; respectful, or encouraging. Love is not referred to here as an emotion. Love is action; it is treatment. Perspective. Words, Actions. Attitudes.

**(ii.) Pray for those who persecute you (v44b)**

\*Not that you become Sons of your father, by doing this, but that you become *known* as or *identified* as sons of your Father in heaven, because of these traits. "The Apple doesn't fall far from that tree." "A Chip of the Almighty block". Jesus is stating, that the character and traits of our Lord Jesus and His Kingdom are to be displayed in us and should leave others with a taste of God's KoH.

If you want to Change your problems with others, Pray. Pray for them. And God may change you also, or at least change your attitude toward them. This would be in regard to personal relations, or even Political candidates. If ever we needed to do this, it is today.

**God's grace is experienced by all. (v45)**

**Mat 5:44-45** ESV " (44) But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (45) so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. **For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust**

God is gracious to all, doesn't mean all are saved. But His grace is available to all, and His *common* grace is given to all people.



**(i.) Our Identity (v.45a)**

\* A gracious lifestyle doesn't make us children of the KoH, but it does help *identify us as* citizens of the KoH.

**(ii.) Our Example (v45b)**

All people receive rain and sunshine; they are able to sow and harvest. In general, all people are blessed with health, automobiles, houses, jobs, food, clothing, air to breath, etc. God is gracious to all. God is even good and gracious to pagan unbelievers. All people. HE even withholds judgment in order to allow for repentance.

If God Himself is gracious towards those who reject Him, why should we feel it is beyond us to be gracious towards those who abuse, reject or persecute us? Or even those who disagree with us? Such as family members, coworkers, neighbors or politicians or those of a particular political party.

If Jesus prayed for His persecutors: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do? – Should we not likewise, be able to be gracious toward our "enemies" and be genuinely and fervently praying for them? Loving our enemies is all about, our identity as true followers of Christ, who have a different reason for living and a Christ-like manner in which we are supernaturally able to treat abusive people differently; even love them. It reflects our true identity and it reveals our heavenly example. Be gracious to all. In so doing, it will let others know who we belong to and who we are following.

**WE HAVE A DIFFERENT WAY OF LIVING (5:45-48)**

\* We don't merely have a different reason for living, but we put that into practice by demonstrating we have a different way of living; or treating others. And this, Scripture says, will set us apart, in the eyes of the on looking world.

## **Living like the King of the KoH (v46)**

**Mat 5:46-48** ESV (46) **For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (47) And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? (48)** You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

### **(i.) Love the loveable; be friendly to the friendly (v46)**

If we live like that then we're just living like the rest of the fallen sinful, unredeemed world around us.

### **(ii.) Tax collectors and gentiles**

But children of God and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, with Jesus Christ as our Identity and our Example - are not to be commended for living as children of the kingdom of darkness.

## **The Apple and the Tree (v47)**

\* Be like your Father in heaven. We are to be commended if we live as children of the Kingdom of Light, representing our King of Light, through our **Attitudes, Behavior and Choices.**

**Mat 5:46-48** ESV (46) For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (47) And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? (48) **You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

Be Like your Father in Heaven (5:45)

Unless Your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20)

You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. (5:48)

Once again, the Law of God, while requiring perfect righteousness, heavenly perfection and God likeness; also magnifies and celebrates the Grace of God; that in our imperfectness, He demonstrates His perfection. In our Unrighteousness, He imparts to us His all-sufficient righteousness. In our unloving attitudes, His love is abounding and is

able to love others through us.

This is the “Love from Above”. If Jesus is ruling over us; if we are genuinely filled with God’s Holy Spirit and He is controlling us; then He can and will love others Supernaturally, through us.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Individual, circumstances in our nation, our jobs, politics, elections – can cause us to hate those whom we perceive as our “enemy”.

**(1) Humbly ask** God to make our character to reflect the character of Christ and His eternal Kingdom. Be consumed with this prayer. Expect God to answer by considering; “How does He want to change me?”

**(2) Pray for those** whom you consider to be your enemy. Look for ways to bless those who are cursing you. Look for ways to encourage those who are discouraging you. Look for ways to respect those who are disrespecting you.

**(3) Invite God** to make you perfect as He is perfect. “God I invite you to fill me with your “Love from Above”. “Fill me with your perfect love, so that I may love others as you do. Bless me to leave others with a lasting taste of your eternal kingdom to come.

**SERIES:** SERMON ON THE MOUNT: "The Narrow Way"

Oct.18, 2020

**Sermon Title:** "Count the Cost" / "Consider the Government

**TEXT:** Mat. 5:43-48

**To Be Determined:** What will happen and how will I respond if the election does not go the way I voted?

## INTRODUCTION

Before I begin, I want you to know that I am very thankful for our country and for the freedoms and rights we enjoy. I am thankful for our constitution and believe, because of that and of the presence of God, the USA is the greatest nation on earth. So because of what has transpired in our nation over the past months or so, and as I entertain the possible "what ifs", of the upcoming election; I feel it is of utmost importance that we ask, seriously consider, and then answer these questions of concern that I will present today; and then of course, Act accordingly.

I am concerned that God is allowing the church to be tested, and I am not sure we, as the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, are learning the lessons or are passing the test.

**Luk 14:28-33** ESV (28) For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and **count the cost**, whether he has enough to complete it? (29) Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, (30) saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' (31) Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? (32) And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. (33) So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Think through the challenge. Evaluate the Cost and its effect on the builder. Determine if it is the best and most effective course of action; and will the results be favorable? My concern is that the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, may not be learning the lessons God wants to teach us. So many have been so overwhelmed by frustrations with the

government and irritation over the mask, among other things. If this is a test to prepare us for something worse down the road, I wonder if we are being prepared or becoming more angry church goers? And if what we are experiencing is a test from God to teach the church, what will this test reveal about the church?

**When it comes to God, Government and Persecution, have we counted the cost of how our actions as the church, will affect our relationship with God or our Mission field?**

For the church: (1) What will the effect of my actions be as we face these challenges? (2) What is the best course of action for our desired results? (3) What effect will our actions have? (4) Will the results of our actions be beneficial in the long run?

**\*\* Persecution today and our view of Govt and Authority.**

**THE LAW OF GOD ON THE CHURCH AND GOVERNMENT**

**\*God, Government and Persecution.**

**Rom 13:1-6** ESV (1) Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. (2) Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. (3) For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, (4) for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. (5) Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. (6) For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

Will our situation be Prosecution for our actions, rather than Persecution for our faith? We must remember that the Government is not our enemy.

**1Pet. 2:11-19** ESV (11) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (12) Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that

when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (13) Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, (14) or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. (15) For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. (16) Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. (17) Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. (18) Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. (19) For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

In other words, Government is an institution ordained by God. The goal of the Government is to punish wrong doers. If we disobey the Law, we should be expected to be punished as wrong doers.

Rather than a Trial or Hardship or irritation or inconvenience or persecution: Consider what we are going through now, not as an attack from Satan, but perhaps as a Test from God.

**Questions we must answer, before we face genuine persecution and before the Election.** What will this test from God teach the church and then what will this test reveal about the church?

**(1) Is there hatred in my heart for any form of our government or level or authority or for any candidate?** If so, then it is sin and must be confessed and repented from. If you cannot control your words without disrespecting and slandering the government or a government figure, you have may the sin or hatred. If you are listening to, watching or otherwise being influenced by media organizations that consistently slander and disrespect “the other side”; you may be feeding a hate-filled attitude and don’t even realize it.

**Mat 5:43-44 ESV (43) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'** (44) But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...

QQ: What might be the problem of harboring hatred toward any

Governmental official or political candidate? (Is.59:1-2) This is first and foremost the most important question we must answer or act on.

**(2) Do you feel that Christians in America have been, in some level, under persecution for our faith in Jesus Christ, over the past 6 months?**

**(3) If so, how has the church responded to that persecution?**

**QQ:** Have we responded Appropriately? Godly? Have we the church, loved its enemies? Has the church blessed those in authority who seek to curse or abuse us? Has the church responded successfully? Has the church responded in a manner that displays full trust in God; or have we displayed fear, animosity and slander, or an attitude of fighting for “Christian rights”?

Have Christians responded Lovingly toward those who have promoted restrictions surrounding the issue of CoVid? Has the church responded with a spirit of desperation in prayerfulness? Have we displayed a Christ-likeness?

<p><b>Ex.22:28</b> You must not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.</p>
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In Acts 23:5, Paul unknowingly spoke harshly and disrespectfully toward the high priest and was rebuked for it. At which point he seemed to acknowledge his wrong doing and quoted Ex.22: in repentance.

**(4) Could these present circumstances be purposed under God’s sovereignty, as a way that would prune us and purify the church`?**

Do you believe God is in control of all events and circumstances? If God is in control, can we trust that He has a purpose and a plan for it all.

**(5) Are we learning our lessons that God wants to teach the church, and are we growing from these experiences, in a manner that would help prepare us for even greater “persecution” down the road?**

If we learn our lessons, we grow stronger and more Christ-like and our

faith is deepened. If we fail to learn the lessons God has for us, He may allow something more severe that will be more effective.

**(6) If we are learning, then what exactly are those lessons we have learned?** Could we write the lessons down? How have those lessons changed us; our attitudes? our political conversations? Has it practically affected who we love and who we hate? And are we more equipped now to persevere under persecution, than we were 7 months ago.

“You are the Salt of the Earth, but if the salt loses its saltiness, how will it regain its saltiness? And if the church should lose its witness, how then, shall we regain our witness?

When we disobey the Government...

**(7) Are we sure we know just exactly what command it is that we think we are obeying, in defying the government?** You’d be hard pressed to find any verse of scripture to support anything we are facing today, other than how we as Christians are expected to respond in the face of adversity.

If we think we are obeying Heb.10:25; “Do not forsake the assembling of your selves together...”. We may think today, it is our constitutional right to gather and meet in our church building. For the life of this nation, there has never been such a constitutional right stated like that.

Ultimately, this is not an issue of “Separation of church and State”; This is not about the “Freedom of Speech”.(At least not Yet). IT is not specifically against any “Peaceful Assembly”.

Churches are suing the government, because they are hindering the church from all gathering together. That has never been a promised right from God to the church; not like its being addressed in our culture, under these circumstances.

It is expressed as though, if Christians are not all in the same place, at the same time, it doesn’t count as “**gathering together**” in Heb.10:25. If that’s the case then the early church was disobedient to God’s command for the first 3 centuries. As near as archaeological history can inform us,



the first church designated meeting place, that was more than a individual's home, wasn't built until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

If we feel that our Christian rights in America are covered and provided in our American Constitution, then what does that say about the rest of the church over the past 2,000 years in every geographic location on the planet? It is believed that 2/3 to ¾ of the world's population lives under religious restriction, abuse and/or persecution. So why has God not given them such constitutional rights and freedoms? Have they been forsaken by God?

The fact is, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, has never held such modern claims as being rights given to them from God, that I can determine. But rather, the church has always met in homes, in fields, in caves, along rivers, in warehouses, in small groups, under trees or canopies, at the intersection of tribal trails, or on the run; AND yes, in buildings.

My concern is that some feel if we don't all get together in the same place at the same time, it doesn't count as church and that is an American perspective, not a Biblical perspective. If we believe that, we will always be fighting the governmental authorities, and debating laws, constitutions, amendments and rights; and in the process, possibly pushing our mission field farther and farther away from what God wants the world to see in His church; which is the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His kingdom.

Keep your conduct among the gentiles honorable. (Rom.13:12). If we believe these things; and allow our focus to be on these issues; then when real persecution does come, the church of our Lord Jesus may well fall, due to its own misconceptions of what we are entitled, and what God has call us to do. SHINE.

I'm not saying we should just roll over and play dead and do nothing when the Authorities attempt to shut down the church. But I am urging us all to simply consider our witness and how has the church responded over the past 2,000 years and how we are responding today?

**(8) At this stage, is it the will of God, for churches to sue and defy our government?** Is it God's will for the church to defy our government, disobey their mandates and possibly even take the Government to court.

**(9) How is this affecting my witness to the people God has called me to reach with the Good News of our Lord Jesus?** Again, regardless of what is going on and what Christians are experiencing; I see this as the greater issue to be concerned with.

**(10) If it comes down to it, how much am I willing to suffer for Christ?** If we disobey the Government they we should not be surprised when the Government responds by punishing our "wrong doing". And if we do, how much are we willing to suffer and what difficulties might our actions indirectly inflict upon our families.

**(11) What steps of defiance and civil disobedience am I prepared to take?** Where is the line in the sand? "I'll endure this much, but if the government goes beyond this, then I will rebel and defy their orders." I will risk my job. I will risk going to jail. I will risk putting my family under hardship due to my possible imprisonment. This whole issue isn't as cut and dry as we may think. There could be many unpleasant ramifications to our disobedience that may do more damage than whatever it is we think the Government is doing to us.

I can't help but think; that we tend to think that if we were to get arrested, we'd get bailed out and be out the next morning. But realistically, am I and my family, really prepared to suffer the consequences for my actions of disobeying the authorities? We always go back to **Acts 5:29**. I don't know how many times I have heard or read people quoting this passage. "**We must obey God rather than man**"? But I don't think we have really "counted the cost" of that action.

**Act 5:28-30** ESV (28) ... "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." (29) **But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.** (30) The

God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

I hear this quoted a lot today. Bear in mind, this is not a command to do as Peter did, but is an example that may be followed or not. But I would say; “If we follow that example then: (1) We must realize it was specifically about being prohibited from preaching or teaching in the name of Jesus. (2) Do we even know what it was Peter was resisting? And (3) Are we ready to experience the same consequences as Peter did?

**Act 5:40-42** ESV (40)...and when they had called in the apostles, they **beat** them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (41) Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.** (42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

I agree, that “we must obey God rather than man.” But we must plan ahead: (1) what steps am I personally willing to take? (2) Am I prepared to suffer the consequences for my actions, as Peter, Paul and the early disciples were? Peter disobeyed. Then endured the consequences. And he rejoiced over their sufferings.

**Mat 5:11-12** ESV "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (12) Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**(12) Am I personally prepared to suffer Joyfully?** One good test to determine that answer, is another question: “Am I presently, joyfully enduring the irritation and inconveniences of the Government’s Covid actions and restrictions?

**Rom 12:12** ESV Rejoice in hope, be ***patient in tribulation***, be constant in prayer.

**Col 1:24** ESV Now ***I rejoice in my sufferings*** for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for Christ in spreading the gospel and making disciples. Frankly I can't think of one joyful Christian who has been talking about civil disobedience in our present context.

**2Co 1:5** For as we ***share abundantly in Christ's sufferings***, so through **Christ** we share abundantly in comfort too.

**1Pe 4:13** But ***rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.***

IF we are not enduring the present circumstances with joy, we will most likely not be able to meet worse circumstances in the future with joy, when the heat is turned up in real persecution and we may be sinning in our resistance.

**(13) Are we aware that suffering in this life, promises to reap a wealth of rewards in the life to come?**

**Mat 5:11-12** ESV "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (12) **Rejoice and be glad**, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Are we ready and willing to lay up treasures in heaven, through our sufferings in this earthly life?

**(14) Have we carefully thought through, what would be the outcome if the church wages war** on the authorities, by taking our government to court? Again, I'm not saying there might not be a time when we should do that. I am just asking, "Have we counted the cost and considered the outcome of our potentially defiant behavior, if we did. Have we considered that we may be responsible for turning our own mission field against the gospel of Christ.

**(15) Remember that Christians in every era of Church history and in practically every geographic location have experienced persecution** and suffered for their faith in Jesus Christ. Why would we feel that God

*THE NARROW WAY*  
should spare us?

\* Some think: “This is not really persecution. When real persecution comes, we’ll know it and I’ll be ready for it.” And when that time comes, we may act the same, and think the same; “when worse persecution comes, then I’ll face it with joy.” – Probably not.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Learn from the Persecuted Church around the world. “The church in America is all but oblivious to the immensity of the heavenly joy to be experienced in our earthly sufferings.”

In the book “The Privilege of Persecution”, there is a quote from Brother Andrew, who is often known as “the God Smuggler.”

He states: In recent years, as I’ve traveled in the West, people have said to me, “Brother Andrew”, what the church needs is a revival. We are praying for Revival.” But I disagree! What the church needs is reformation! Revival puts more people in the pews. Reformation will transform the thinking and behavior of the church and reveal Jesus to a broken World. That is what we need.

The church under persecution experiences worship and prayer to a depth few of us have experienced, nor imagined.(PoP, p,10)

I wonder if we knew that the price to be paid for genuine Revival, is the loss of the rights and freedoms we hold so dear here in America; I wonder if we’d really desire it and pray for it. Persecution has historically been the rod of discipline through which God brings about true revival to the church. IF we knew God would bring us revival through persecution, would we still pray for Revival?

As the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must learn the lessons of joy, patience, and humility in times of opposition and loss. We must pass the test with which God is allowing us to be tested. We must become stronger during this time, in order to face and be victorious in the times ahead when it is just a matter of time; that real persecution against God’s people and the church begins.

Depending on how the Election goes, persecution and real loss of rights may be much closer than we had imagined. Are we ready for it?

**(1) Learn the lessons God has for us** regarding dealing with adversity.

**(2) Develop a heart like that of Christ, Himself**; that loves those who hated and persecuted Him.

**(3) Be aware that how we interact with our culture** and specifically the authorities, will determine how our culture views us as Christians, and may affect their openness to our message about Jesus.

**(4)** Realize now, that persecution is what God often uses to purify and strengthen the church.

**(5)** Rejoice in our sufferings, in whatever level they may come, because we are sharing in Christ's sufferings, as well as sharing in the sufferings of centuries of faithful followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“As for us, we are poor and needy, but the Lord  
takes thought for us. You are our Help and our Deliverer;  
do not delay, O my God!”     -Psalm 40:17

**SERIES:** SERMON ON THE MOUNT: "The Narrow Way"

Oct.25, 2020

**Sermon Title:** "Where Is God?"

**TEXT:**

**To Be Determined:** What must I do and what level of responsibility will God hold me accountable for my actions?

**THEME:** Upcoming Elections

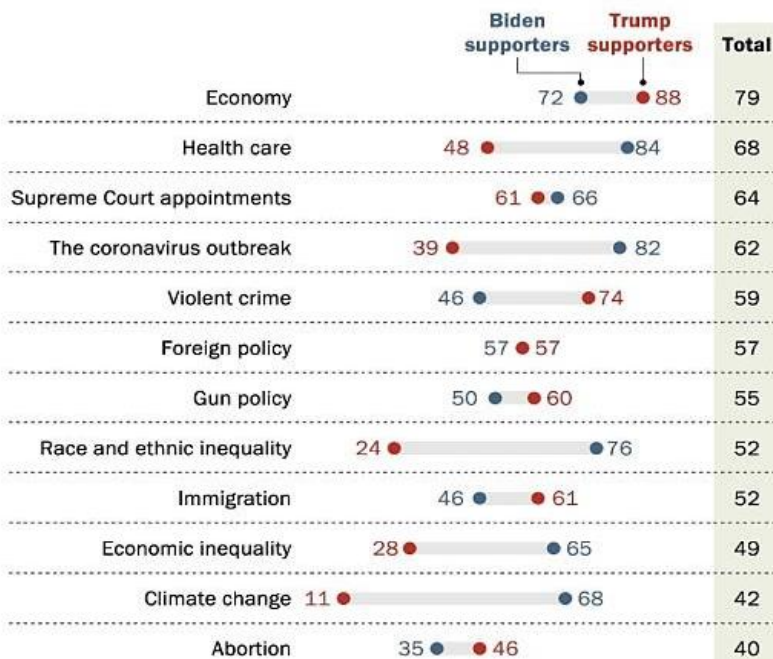
**REVIEW**

**Luk 14:28,33** ESV (28) For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? (33) So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

**Rom 13:1-6** ESV (1) Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

## Top issues for Trump supporters are economy, crime; Biden supporters prioritize health care, coronavirus

% of registered voters saying each is 'very important' to their vote in the 2020 presidential election



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 27-Aug. 2, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## INTRODUCTION:

**I thought it was horrifying that in this study, Abortion wasn't even in the top 10 of the most important issues in the Election.**

- **Abortions in 2020 in USA:** Eighteen percent of pregnancies (excluding miscarriages) in 2017 ended in abortion.
  - Approximately 862,320 abortions were performed in 2017, down 7% from 926,190 in 2014.
- **Abortion around the world:** Unintended pregnancy and abortion are experiences shared by people around the world. These reproductive health outcomes occur irrespective of country income level, region or the legal status of abortion.
- Roughly 121 million unintended pregnancies occurred each year between 2015 and 2019.
- Of these unintended pregnancies, 61% ended in abortion. This translates **to 73 million abortions per year.**
  - \* **And those are only Unintended pregnancies** that resulted in abortion. That does not include people who wanted to get pregnant, but aborted their child, due to medical, psychological problems or due to other pressures or issues.

**\*\*Human sex trafficking in USA:** The International Labor Organization estimates that there are **40.3 million** victims of human trafficking globally, with **hundreds of thousands in the United States.** The victims of this crime in the U.S. are men and women, adults and children, and foreign nationals and U.S. citizens. Sex trafficking is big business in America.

Abe Lincoln has been quoted: **“Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God’s side, for God is always right.”**

In discussing the issues of this election, I often feel like I’m talking to a man who is standing on the ledge of a building, who is determined to jump and end it all.



**2Cor. 5:9-10** ESV (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body,** whether good or evil.

If we harbor hatred in our hearts, we will give account to God for that. If we allow hatred to guide our voting, we will give account to God for not only our hatred, but for the very issues we voted for or against, due to the blinding influence of that hatred in our hearts.

I don't believe we will necessarily give account to God for our policies on what we did or didn't do, regarding the economy or unemployment; or who we did or didn't support in the election due to the economy. Is it more Godly if we increase taxes in order to give the Govt more money to work with, whether responsibly or irresponsibly? Or is it more Godly to lower taxes so people will have more money to spend back into the economy, whether responsibly or irresponsibly?

If we do or don't take certain steps toward addressing the Corona Virus or Climate change; will God condemn someone for guessing wrongly and taking the wrong steps in any of those areas? The media may have a field day with it, but from the Bible's perspective, it's a bit of an A-moral issue.

**1Cor. 10:31** ESV So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, ***do all to the glory of God.***

So everything we do has some level of moral effect, though the act itself may not be perceived as an actual moral act or issue. Perhaps as Christians, the motive for doing what we do may be the greater moral issue. What is our motive for voting the way we will vote?

### **(1) "Where is God" in this Election:**

Where is God in your vote? Where is God in the issues you will be voting on? What does the Bible tell us about the topics that are supported or promoted by the party I will be voting for?

Where is God in the platform of the party you are voting for? Which party is supportive of God, prayer, Christian rights, and the Bible? Or

which party has officially removed God from their platform; and from the pledge of allegiance or even from our history books? Which party has allowed for prayer at schools, ball games and other public gatherings and which party is attempting to silence all prayers in all places?

Which party is against the moral sin and push toward legalizing Pedophilia as an alternative sexual orientation?

Which party fought for the rights of transgendered or sexually confused men, to be allowed to use girls rest rooms and locker rooms?

Which party has supported, funded and fought for the sins of abomination such as abortion, or allowing children to die who survived a botched abortion; or those who promote the termination of children born with certain chromosomal abnormalities.

Some will say: "I'm only voting for \_\_\_\_\_ because I don't like \_\_\_\_\_".

If you vote for a person, you are voting for the entire platform that party stands for.

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Mother Teresa said: "We must not be surprised when we hear of murders, of killings, of wars, of hatred. If a mother can kill her own child, what is left but for us to kill each other?"  
*and*: "A nation that kills its children in the womb has lost its soul."

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Where is God in the Election? I believe there to be no more important question than that.

## **(2) Vote for Biblical issues, rather than for or against an individual *personality*.**

If you vote for one candidate because you hate the other candidate, I would say you are casting your vote to destroy America. God will not honor a heart of hatred, especially if it is from those of us who name the name of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Vote or Pray for USA with a heart of hatred toward either party, you

cannot expect God to answer your prayer nor bless this nation, on our behalf. God is nowhere in an act like that.

Which party supports prayer, the Bible Christian rights? What about Traditional Christian values? Family values?

Don't vote out of hatred. Vote according to Biblical issues. Vote a party but don't vote out of hatred.

Franklin Graham is urging Christians to please vote according to Biblical convictions in this Election. Dr James Dobson is pleading for the church in America to refrain from voting for a person or against a personality and to vote for the issues that honors the Lord.

**Which party is fighting or supporting the LGBT agendas?** The LGBT is promoting pedophilia, as an alternative sexual orientation.

**Which party is fighting Human Sex Trafficking?** We must vote for Biblical Issues.

### **(3) Vote for Primary Issues of Morality.**

**Morality:** Principles of value, based on right or wrong, good or bad behavior, as it pertains to the Righteous Standard God's Law and its effects on others, whether in helping or hurting others."

Remember: When you vote for a person, you are casting a vote to support every issue on that party's platform. So which party supports prayer, the Bible Christian rights, human life inside and outside the womb?

Don't vote out of hatred. Vote according to Biblical issues. Vote a party but don't vote out of hatred.

### **Primary and Secondary Moral Issues.**

I view the issues - and I try to be consistent on all issues of life, politics, and morality with this view. I view everything as Primary and/or Secondary moral issues. **Primary Moral Issues** are issues like the 10 Commandments; moral issues that we abide by or violate; whether deviant sexual orientation, anger or murder; hatred, stealing, etc. These

would be laws of God we can clearly identify and can clearly know when they've been broken or violated, if and when we measures it according to God's Righteous Standards in Scripture.

Then there are **Secondary Moral Issues**. These would be things like Climate Change - no law addressing that other than "man having dominion over creation." Being on the same side of Climate Change is not a sin. Failure of those on one side of CC to act in a manner that is acceptable to those on the other side of CC is not a sin.

Primary Moral Issues may result in **sin**, which may result in God bringing judgment. Secondary Moral Issues may result in unfortunate problems, but are not caused by sin, and would not incur God's direct judgment for those results.

Climate change may not be a Primary Issue of Morality, however the "potential" result of CC may produce a moral issue, being people drowning due to water levels rising, changing ecologies, extinction of certain species, etc. One is a Primary Moral Issue, the other is a Secondary Moral Issue that may result in other unforeseen moral issues, but as you can see, are profoundly different.

Wildfires that occur due to too much dry brush and timber, is a shame, but not necessarily a Primary Moral Issue, while abortion, sexual perversions that allow TransGendered men to enter girls rest rooms are definitely in the Primary Moral Issue category.

OTHER EXAMPLES: Building a Border Wall would be a Secondary Moral Issue. Whether or not we build a wall is not a Primary Moral Issues. There is not Biblical Law or Standard of Righteousness that is being broken or obeyed in building a wall; or refraining from building a wall. What makes it a Secondary Moral Issue is that by building a wall, many immigrants who are fleeing to USA would prevented from entering our borders and finding asylum, hope and prosperity in our nation. That would be one possibly moral issue as a result of building a wall.

However, there could also be a moral issue for failing to build a wall. If no wall was built and open borders and unrestrained immigration was allowed into our nation; it would be an open invitation for terrorists and

others who desired to destroy America to come in and take up residency and begin their plan to destroy USA. AS a result of that, there would now be no safe, Prosperous America for under privileged oppressed immigrants to flee to. That is a Secondary Moral Issue.

Gun Rights is a Secondary Moral Issue. There is no law in God's Standard of Righteousness that states we must not have guns. So this is not a Primary Moral Issue, since we do not sin by either having or not having a gun. However if violent criminals have access to weapons without any screening, it could result in murder or robbery; which the robbery or murder would be a Primary Moral Issue, the possession of a gun would be a Secondary Moral Issue.

The Bible doesn't instruct us on how to ensure that everyone has Health Care, so this is a Secondary Moral Issue; Still a moral issue as everyone needs good healthcare.

Racism is injustice - hatred against or favor toward people of different ethnicities. We may view racism as a Primary Moral Issue. However ethnic **inequality** or economic inequality, or social inequality would be a Secondary Moral Issue. Secondary because God's Standard of Righteousness in Scripture does not command that all people have the same positions, possessions, bank accounts, level of lifestyle, same automobiles or same houses; but still a moral issue as a person in some of those situations may lack adequate food, employment, housing or healthcare or basic human needs. However, just because there is inequality, does not necessarily make it a matter of injustice.

**(4) Israel:** Apart from Abortion, this may be the most important aspect of the election. This is not merely foreign policy or International Relations. Honoring God and being under God's blessing or curse.

**Gen 12:1-3** ESV (1)Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. (2) And I will make of you a great **nation**, and I will **bless** you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. (3) I will **bless** those who **bless** you, and him who **dishonors** you I will **curse**, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Friends of Israel. Supporters of Israel. Praying for Israel.

## **(5) Racism – both ways**

Vote against White Supremacy as well as for Black Supremacy.  
Reverse Racism is still racism.

## **Secondary Moral Issues to be concerned about**

**6) Immigrations:** Is there a concern for and stated plan to address keeping people with evil intent out of our nation, while allowing people with legitimate needs to enter into our nation? Also, is it possible for USA to help other people in other nations, to help their nations become better, if the Govt. is interested.

## **7) Health Care and Welfare: Are there measures in place to plan to help care for people who cannot help themselves?**

*\* Both parties acknowledge this issue but intend to address it differently.*

## **8) Criminal violence: and Law Enforcement Personnel:**

*\* Both parties acknowledge this issue but intend to address it differently.*

## **9) Economy & Unemployment:**

*\* Both parties acknowledge this issue but intend to address it differently.*

**10) Corona Virus:** *\* Both parties acknowledge this issue but intend to address it differently.*

## **11) Climate Change, Supreme Court Appointments, Tax Relief, Education and school reform;**

*\* Both parties acknowledge this issue but intend to address it differently.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

In the past, I have felt: (1) Pray. (2) Vote. (3) Trust God with the outcome. And I still hold to each of those. But more than ever I am feeling the weight of our own personal responsibility to simply do what is right before God. I feel there is a gun pointed to the head of the United States of America and our vote is to determine, “will we pull the trigger

or will we disarm the assailant?

CHRISTIANS - Don't merely vote for a candidate, VOTE FOR THE ISSUES. However remember this: A vote for the candidate of your choice, is a vote in favor of every issue on that party's platform, whether stipulated by that particular candidate or not.

Today, our greatest questions is “Where is God” in my Vote? In the platform for which I am voting? Will I vote in favor of Things that God calls “Abomination”?

**Do we realize that God has lessons for the church to learn in these situations?**

- \* The Elections will not determine the health or viability of the church. No person, no candidate, no Government, no satanic system can determine the health and life of the church; only what we give up, give into or allow to destroy our faith.
- \* The Election will not determine whether we are able to do what the church is supposed to be doing. So as far as I know, what goes on inside our minds and hearts, cannot be stopped. IF the persecuted church around the world has been obedient to God’s Word over the past 2,000 yrs, with all its restrictions, surely we can too.
- \* The elections will not determine whether or not we can share our faith in Jesus Christ. WE will always have the ability to do that, whether in freedom or in prison. It May be risky. But that is our choice now; it will be our choice if we lose our freedoms.
- \* The Elections will not determine whether or not we can pray.
- \* The Elections will not determine whether or not the church can express love to one another, fellowship or serve one another.
- \* The Elections will not determine whether or not.... The church will be the church or not.

What the elections may do: The election may determine the number of souls executed in the womb, through the curse of Abortion. They may

determine whether or not we have the freedom to speak out against abortion, or Christian rights, or a number or other Biblical issues. The Election may lead to the destruction of a Constitutional America. The Election may well lead to a Socialist, Communist or Marxist form of government, economy and religion in your lifetime.

The Coming Election may very well be a test of our faith that we have not experienced since the Civil War. The coming Election may test Our Courage, our resolve and even the genuineness of our Christian faith. ***It may change the way the church does church for the remainder of our lifetime.*** Because there is the chance that if the vote goes one way, it will be the beginning of the end, for Constitutional Rights, Christian Freedoms, and other opportunities we have enjoyed in the past. What the elections may do for the church in America, is reveal whether or not we are in it for Christ, or are we in it for the traditions we are accustomed to practicing?

**Psa 20:7** ESV Some trust in chariots and some in horses, **but we trust in the name of the LORD** our God.

**Jer 17:5-9** ESV Thus says the LORD: "**Cursed** is the man who **trusts in man** and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. (6) He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. (7) "**Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.** (8) He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit." (9) The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Christians quote that all the time. The Election may test how much we really believe that which we read and quote.

### **Prayer for America and the Election.**

**Mat 6:9-13** ESV .... "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. (10) May Your kingdom come; May your will be done, in America, 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. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the Glory forever. Amen”

If you think the Tribulation is so far away from us that we would never experience it in our time; think again. Tribulation is knocking on the door of our nation. Our vote will be to determine: will we let Tribulation in, or will we send him on his way for good?

When you vote, you should enter the voting area soberly. And as we vote, we should be thinking and praying about what we are doing and what may be the outcome. Relish this vote, because if the vote goes one way, this may be the last time we ever vote this way again.

**SERIES:** SERMON ON THE MOUNT: “The Narrow Way”

Nov.1, 2020

**Sermon Title:** “Practicing our Righteousness

**TEXT:** Mat.6:1-4

**MATTHEW:** ‘Thy Kingdom Come”

**Theme :** The Test of our Purity, in the Practice of our Righteousness”

## REVIEW

As we began in chapter 5: last December: The Sermon on the Mount; “The Narrow Way”, we learned:

**(1)** that Jesus is preaching to 3 specific groups, of a variety of people, from a variety of places, with a variety of levels of faith.

**Mat 5:1** ESV Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

**Luk 6:13-18** ESV (13) And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them <sup>1</sup>twelve, whom he named apostles.

(17) And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a <sup>2</sup>great crowd of his disciples and <sup>3</sup>a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, (18) who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.

**(2)** Jesus preached about the Kingdom of Heaven, then would often perform some miracle, that would leave them with a taste of what the KoH would be like; No more pain; no more sickness, no more death, no more crying; no more possessed by evil and unclean spirits.

So the Kingdom of Heaven is bigger than merely “the family of God”, it is how things are to operate in that kingdom and in the lives of its citizens; that is us, the church. The “Narrow Way” is about the entrance *into* this kingdom is narrow, through faith in Jesus alone, and our journey *through* that kingdom is strewn with troubles.

The Kingdom of heaven in corporate. being part of the Family of God through faith in Jesus Christ, but also refers to the overall rule and reign of the King of that Kingdom, over each and every one of us who are citizens of that kingdom.(cp.5:3,10, 19, 20)

## INTRODUCTION:

Following His corrections on “the Law” in chapter 5, Jesus begins this segment with further clarification re: how the Christian displays our faith; or what we often refer to as some of the “Spiritual Disciplines”. Now in ch.6, Jesus addresses our Christian practices(6:1). Then in 6:2-4, specifically He deals with the practice of Giving; In 6:5-15 he deals with the practice of Prayer; and in 6:16-18, He deals with the practice of Fasting.

**Mat 6:1-4** ESV (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. (2) "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. (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. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

AS Jesus did with his teachings on the OT Law, correcting the inaccuracies of the teachings of the Religious leaders – Here He addresses the *practices* of the religious leaders and refers to them as Hypocrites.

*So Jesus begins by addressing...*

### **THE PURITY OF PRACTICING RIGHTEOUSNESS** (Mat.6:1

\* In the Gospels, under moderately peaceful settings, the religious leaders were the ones who often practiced their righteousness or the spiritual discipline, through Giving, in a very public manner.

Winston Churchill once said: “We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.” And Jesus said, “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” Today our focus is on practicing our Righteousness and specifically on *Giving*.

### ***Practicing Righteousness***

**Mat 6:1** ESV (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.

This is about living our Christian life and putting our faith into action. Jesus begins this section with a general warning, then precedes to deal with 3 specifics of our kingdom journey; Giving, Prayer and Fasting. Then in v.19 he returns back to the initial warning.

6:1) This would refer to “**living out their faith**”. Practicing Righteousness was not merely a reference to performing good works or deeds, but how we are to live as citizens of God’s Kingdom of Heaven. And How we are to live also refers to our motive for doing what we do.

**“Take Heed”**; Be Alert. Take Notice. If we were driving down a long monotonous stretch of road, “Be very, very Careful” would be a warning sign along the road that alerted us of potential ice on the bridge ahead; or a curvy section of road ahead, where we may need to slow down and pay more careful attention to the curves. If the warning was related to medication, it may be an “alert” on the label of how this medicine may interact with other medications or presenting other undesirable side effects.

“Be Very Very Careful how you put your faith into action, because Motive is everything. Motive is Everything!

Remember in 5:20, Jesus stated that, “Your righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees.” It seems that their “righteousness” was more self-righteousness, and that their righteousness was not lived out by pure motives.

It was not meant to encourage people to make the religious leaders their standard of Righteousness, for theirs was as unrighteous as the worst of sinners. But it was intended to urge them to be **careful** of their own motives; be **certain** that their faith is genuine and be **concerned** that we do not mistakenly lay up our treasures on earth, rather than in heaven.

### ***The Purity of our Righteousness***

**(i be certain that our faith is genuine (6:1a**

**Mat 6:1a "Beware of *practicing your righteousness*.....”**

(v.1) Am I certain that I am truly trusting in Jesus Christ as my personal Savior? Am I certain that how I am living is sincere, genuine,

“Authentic” – there’s the Christian-ese terminology of the decade. We are certainly not going to fool God.

Am I honestly living out my faith for God and before the World? Am I doing what I am doing or living as I am living because it is what is within my heart to do so and am I doing it to honor the Lord and to help others?

**(ii.) to be careful of their own motives (6:1b)**

(v.1) "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people ***in order to be seen by them***... Remember, Motive is Everything. We must be careful that we don’t give to be seen by others; that we don’t pray to be heard by others; that we don’t fast to impress others.

So we are getting the impression that living our lives as Christians, with improper focus or motivation may be a “common snare” for believers. So we would do well to take this warning of Jesus to heart today.

Be careful of living or acting a certain way before other people ***in order to be seen by them...*** Am I living out my faith, in Christ, to honor Christ? Or am I attempting to put on some front, so as to make others think I am something or someone that I am not? Maybe more mature, or more gifted or more intelligent in our Bible knowledge....?

Pride can do strange things even to a Christian. This pertains to our personal motivation. Why are we doing what we are doing? What are the motives behind our righteous practices or our apparent Christian lifestyle? Am I living in a manner that is **focused on others seeing me** and “being amazed at my maturity”?

**(iii.) be concerned that we do not lay up our treasures** on earth, rather than in heaven. (6:1c)

**Mat 6:1** ESV (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.***

9 times in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus referst to our “reward” in the Kingdom of Heaven. How easily our human pride can completely

overtake, what began as our perfectly pure motives for giving.

I really think we sometimes nurture that tendency in the church. One person is hailed for their gift, another person is noted for their gift, or spiritual gifts, and on and on; or maybe we let others know what our gift is, or what we think it is. So that we tend to desire the “greatest gifts” as those which get the greatest amount of notoriety.

It seems that “giving” may be intended to be sort of a “behind the scenes” kind of Christian practice.

**ILL)** Many years ago, A woman came into our church just before it began and asked me, “Are the gifts of the Spirit in operation here?” I said, they sure are!. We have at least a couple with the gift of “giving”. At least one undoubtedly has the gift or “mercy”. We have several who manifest the spiritual gift of “service” at all times. We have a couple who manifest the gift of “exhortation”.

And I don’t think we ever saw her again. Those obviously weren’t the “gifts” she was looking for.

The greatest gifts are not necessarily the “spot-light” gifts, but often the behind the scenes gifts or the non-sensational gifts.

*We are warned to:*

<sup>1</sup>Be certain of our own faith in Christ is genuine.

<sup>2</sup>Be careful that our own motives in giving are pure.

<sup>3</sup>Be concerned that our eternal rewards in Heaven are not compromised.

These are important warnings as Christians are Practicing their Righteousness.

*If we were asked: “What is the greatest of the “Spiritual-gifts”?*

## **THE WIDOW AND THE GIFT**

\* After His Warning; he addresses the Priority of Giving. I believe one of the greatest of all the “sign-gifts”, is the sign-gift of “Giving”.

**Mat 6:1-2** ESV (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. (2) "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

### ***The Widow & the Rich / Leaders (Mk. 12:38-44***

\* It is possible to give *more*, even though we give *less*.

**Mar 12:41-44** ESV (41) And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. (42) And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. (43) And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. (44) For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

The rich gave more from an earthly perspective, because they had more. But the widow gave more from heaven's perspective.

The widow gave "*more*", even though she gave "*less*". The monetary value of the widow's gift probably could not be compared with the "rich" who were giving their hefty offerings. They gave out of their abundance, but she gave out of her poverty. And evidently her motives were pure.

She would have had a good excuse for not giving at all. I mean, what was she thinking? She went to give her offering; seems like it was not a spur of the moment kind of thing, but possibly something she had thought about and planned out. Perhaps she was guilty of Pre-Meditated, sacrificial *Giving*.

And lest you think I am attempting to twist your arms to give more to the church. Some feel if you don't give to the church, your giving doesn't really count. But I am firmly convinced that we should give to the church – if we believe in our church and what it stands for and what it is doing in terms of ministry – then we should be giving to the church.

Otherwise something would seem to be wrong.

However we don't have to give *only* to "the church" in order for that gift to "count" as our offering or to be pleasing to God.

**Mat 6:1-4** ESV (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. (2) "Thus, when you **give to the needy...**

Here they are not giving to the church; of course the church didn't exist yet. Neither were they giving to the Synagogue. But they could apparently give directly to the needy person or persons and it would be considered as "giving as unto the Lord", and be pleasing to our heavenly Father.

A trumpet calls attention to something or makes an announcement. As I understand it, trumpets often sound when royalty enters a room or arrives at an event. A trumpet wakes up the soldiers with Revelee. A trumpet sounds and announces that the Cavalry are coming. And a trumpet sounds before the Kentucky Derby is run.

**Mat 6:2** (2) "Thus, when you **give to the needy**, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, **that they may be praised by others....**

Imagine during the offering Doug stands up and sounds his trumpet as Jeff is going to give his offering. It gets people's attention just as Jeff was throwing his money into the offering. And ole Joe over here says, "Wow did you see that roll of bills Jeff threw into the offering? Good thing Doug sounded his Trumpet to call our attention to that or we'd have never seen Jeff through that whole wad of cash into the collection plate. I guess Jeff must be a spiritual giant."

It sounds sarcastic and pretty silly when it plays out like that, but that is the manner in which Jesus describes it with the religious leaders. Now, did they actually sound a trumpet or was it just a reference to them making sure everyone saw what they were doing... I'm not sure. But the point is clear.



**Mat 6:1-4** ESV (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. (2) "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, **that they may be praised by others**. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

The synagogues refer to the religious society and those in the ‘streets’ refers to the common folks. Jesus makes the points that...

\* The Priority in our Giving demonstrates the Purity in our Motivation. And the purity in our motivation demonstrates the priority in our giving.

In other words, we should not make a big public deal when we give. We don't need to broadcast our gift or Christian practice whatever it may be. Public admiration or praise by others around you cannot be allowed into our hearts as motivation for what we do or how we practice our righteousness and live out our Christian faith before the on-looking world.

### ***The “Spiritual-Gift” of Giving***

\* The person who genuinely has the “Gift” of giving, is one who does it without the notice of others, certainly without the motivation of others taking note and being impressed. The person gives generously with a proper motive and sincere heart, who exercises giving with humility.

In Mat. 6:1, “Practicing your Righteousness” is literally translated as “Manifesting Mercy” or acting compassionately; and is interpreted and put into the English here as “practicing Righteousness”.

When Pentecost came in Acts, 2: This is what Giving looked like as the Holy Spirit was moving people's hearts with compassion for one another. Mercy was being displayed and kindness was being expressed. The early church practiced their righteousness by generous giving with pure and selfless motives.

**Act 2:42-45** ESV And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (43) And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being

done through the apostles. (44) And all who believed were together and had all things in common. (45) And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

This was not COMMunism, but was a type of coMUNism; or living in community and caring for one another as needs arose. This ends with a promise as well as another warning.

**Mat 6:3** (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. And your Father who sees in secret, will reward you.

This is another exaggerated statement intended to emphasize that Giving was to be a voluntary expression of the genuine compassion of a person's heart in helping and giving to meet the needs of those who are less fortunate.

**(i.) Be Careful that the promise of a “reward”** does not become the motive for our giving. “If I give then God will reward me...” Some people run away with this... God will give you more than you gave. Give \$20 and God will match that and raise you \$20 and you'll wind up with \$40. Then we are *giving* with the hopes of *getting*. We must be careful the promise of God's reward does not become the motive for our giving or service, or manifesting mercy, or however we may be practicing our Righteousness.

**(ii.) Ask yourself this question:** If the only reward intended here, would be that when you enter into Eternity, God would say: “Well Done, my good and faithful servant!” – would that be enough for you? Would you still give the same?

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus presents Giving in the Spirit in which He addressed the Law. If you notice there aren't many places in Scripture that lines out the steps in giving. Nothing really prescribes the amount or frequency we are to be giving. There aren't many “laws” for Giving in the New Testament. Instead there is references to the “spirit” of giving. Give how? Give compassionately. Give lovingly. Give generously and give selflessly.

<sup>1</sup>Give as you feel the Lord would have you give. It seems that God kind of leaves that aspect to remain between you and the Holy Spirit. Let His Spirit guide you in your giving.

<sup>2</sup>Give in regard to the need at hand. Don't limit yourself to giving just so much or just in certain circumstances. Be willing to give to address whatever need may present itself in another person's life.

<sup>3</sup>Give as you would hope others would give to you, if you were in a similar situation of needing help. This is kind of like applying the Golden Rule to the practice of our righteousness in the area of giving.

Jesus is a compassionate Savior. God is a gracious and loving heavenly Father. And when we give to others, in their time of need and with the right motives in our hearts; we are reflecting and displaying the character of Christ and His kingdom.

I'll close with this observation: God has made nature as an ever present reminder of "giving". The Sun gives light and heat. Trees give nuts and fruit. Bushes give berries. A stream of water brings life to the land and to everything it comes in contact with. Animals and people give birth and bring life into the world." All of creation is a reminder of the Giving nature of our Creator, the character of His eternal kingdom and what he wants our lives to reflect, as citizens of that kingdom.

**SERIES:** SERMON ON THE MOUNT: "The Narrow Way"

Nov.8,15 2020

**Sermon Title:** "Properly Practicing Praying"

**TEXT:** Mat.6:5-15

**MATTHEW:** 'Thy Kingdom Come'

**Theme :** The Test of our Purity, in the Practice of our Righteousness"

*So Jesus begins by addressing The Practice of our Righteousness. Or the Living out of our faith.*

**REVIEW** For the devout believer in Jesus Christ, ideally not much has changed regarding the practice of our faith. We don't suddenly begin living as Christians, merely because of the election. WE don't start really praying passionately because of some event. WE should have already been passionately living out our Christian lives, regardless of the circumstances around us.

WE must be living daily as God has called us to live. WE must be serving Christ as HE has commanded us and praying as Jesus has taught us. BUT – if we have not been living that way – then by all means, start living fully for Jesus Christ today and do not slow down or look back until He returns.

**[READ Matthew 6:1-15]**

In our Holy Bible, the first time we see the spoken word from God to man, was the instruction He gave to mankind, "to be fruitful and multiply".(Gen.1:28) Then the first conversation between God and man that is recorded in Scripture seems to be following their fall into sin.(Gen.3:9-10) But I don't know if we would actually refer to any of those as "prayer".

But in Genesis 4:25-26 we read that men "began to call upon the name of the Lord". IT seems this may be a reference to what we know to be actual prayer, and it presents an interesting aspect of prayer.

Is.40:26 "He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name..." This is in reference to God calling the stars by name. The idea is His knowledge of them, all of them. At that point they had no idea how vast the universe actually was. But even then, the idea of God having knowledge of each star that He calls them by name, is significant. Then in Is.43:1, God calls His own children, by His own

name. He shares His name with His children, indicating intimacy in His relationships with His people.

Utilizing a “name” implies 2 things: (1) Personal knowledge of that person and (2) a level of relational intimacy. God calls us by His name. In John 10, the Shepherd calls His sheep by name. And in Genesis 4:26, In the days of Enos, people “began to call upon the name of the Lord.” Either the days of Enos was the time frame when people began to call upon the name of the Lord, or perhaps it was Enos himself, who modeled the practice of praying with knowledge of God, as well as displaying an intimacy with God in prayer.

*It is in our section today that Jesus addresses...*

## **THE PRACTICE OF PRAYING PROPERLY (6:5)**

**Mat 6:5** ESV (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.

He begins addressing prayer with a warning, as He began in his address of Giving. A Warning: and if this warning was needed then, we probably need it Now.

This is not just a history lesson about the Jews. It is a morality alert for the church in 2020. A Faith Check.

*He begins with our motive in praying.*

### **Motives in Prayer (6:5)**

\* Prayer is practiced, NOT to be seen by others, but to be heard by God. Peter warned: “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1Pet.4:17 ESV). In other words, it is high time, the church of Jesus Christ, examined our own beliefs, practices and lifestyle and evaluate it in light of how we live and respond under pressure.

Prayer is not merely asking for things. But prayer indicates that we are

desperately in need of help. Prayer indicates we are woefully incapable of helping ourselves or resolving our problems.

Doesn't it make sense to us, that praying in order to be noticed or seen by others, isn't prayer at all. It is merely words, an activity to get attention, in order for others to see us and perhaps think highly of us; or will praise us or compliment us. It's a way of attempting to present ourselves as deeply spiritually minded people, so as to impress others who may see us.

That is wrong motives! The practice of our faith does not come with a score card, for those around you to fill out and mail into headquarters, in regard to our own spiritual "greatness". In giving or in praying – if our motive is to be seen by others; then that will be our reward. "Our Motives will become our Rewards".

*\* "How much things matter to us, may determine how much we really pray about it". And How much we really pray about something, may indicate how important it really is to us."*

***Praying with wrong motives, will forfeit their reward in heaven (v.5b)***

**Mat 6:** (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.*

\* Praying with hatred in our hearts may forfeit our reward in prayer and possibly forfeit the answer to the prayer that we were seeking. Our religious practices or the living out of our faith is first and foremost between us and our Father in heaven.

Wrong motives. - *"For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others..."*(v.5)

I can recall a conversation with my own father some years ago. I had mentioned something like: "Aw Dad. Larry's Dad lets him do that." To which my Father replied; "I don't give a 'kitty' what Larry's Father allows him to do! This is not between us and them. This is between you

and me”. And Jesus seems to be indicating that our religious practices are not between us and anyone else – that we might be seen by others.

**Mat 6:6** 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

Pray to your Father in Secret. Practicing our Righteousness or putting our faith into action, though it is often in public; nevertheless it is between no one, but between you and your Heavenly Father. Our giving and our praying are between each of us individually and our heavenly Father. That is what it’s all about.

Our immediate reward in prayer is for an answer to our prayers, not to be seen or admired by others. If we pray for that reason, then that motive will become our reward.

### “THE PITFALLS OF PRACTICING PRAYER”

When we pray; If we pray with impure motives, are we expecting God to answer our prayers? If we pray with hatred in our hearts or any known sin; are we expecting God to hear our prayers and answer us? When we pray, If we pray amis(James 4:3); that is if we pray in a manner that is contrary to the will of God or with an impure or motive; is God obligated to answer our prayers?

“I hate the candidate, so I prayed about it and voted for the other person?” I have to say that I am wondering if... even though a person may have prayed – I’m wondering if God answered that prayer or if you just said some words in God’s direction and then voted the way your darkened *heart* led you to vote?”

**Prov. 15:29** KJV The LORD is far from the wicked: but *he hears the prayer of the righteous.*

**James 5:16** ESV Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The *prayer of a righteous person* has great power as it is working.

Boy, if there is one thing we don't want to be guilty of, is praying in a manner that God does not hear or answer our prayers. So how can we be sure we are praying "righteously"? We must be careful in...

### ***Practicing our Righteousness***

**Mat 6:1** ESV (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.

Jesus began by addressing how we practice "giving". Then He moved to the issue of prayer, which is where we began last week. Practicing our Righteousness, is about living our Christian life and putting our faith into action, in a manner that gets God's attention, not man's.

#### ***(i) Be certain that our faith in Christ is genuine (6:1a***

**v1a)** "***Beware of practicing your righteousness.....***"

Am I certain that I am truly trusting in Jesus Christ as my personal Savior?

#### ***(ii.) Be careful of our own motives (6:1b***

**(v.1b)** "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people *in order to be seen by them* ... Remember, Motive is Everything.

***(iii.) be concerned we are not harboring any known, or nurtured sin in our hearts.***

**Mat 5:43-44** ESV "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' (44) But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

***If we genuinely believe in prayer, then we must be assured that we are praying in a manner that God will hear and answer our prayers.***

*In this section, Jesus addresses...*

### **THE PITFALLS TO PRAYING RIGHTEOUSLY (6:6ff**

Can there actually be pitfalls in praying?

*Jesus instructs us about the "secret place".*

#### **Secret Prayer – Me and God (6:6ff**

**Mat 6:5-6** (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.**

If we believe that prayer is important, then this is absolutely crucial for us to get right. Jesus instructs us about the secret place, because He knows of the importance of the “secret place”. We know that Jesus had his own secret place of prayer.

**Mat 14:23** ESV And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there **alone**,

Jesus’ “secret place” was often in the wilderness or desolate place; or on a mountain, or in the garden. He often prayed alone. His secret place was not a confidential place, but a place where he alone could spend time with His heavenly Father and pray in intimacy.

**(1) Prayer should be Simple:** Simple and UnComplicated. Our circumstances may be complicated, but prayer does not need to be complicated. We don’t have to try and explain everything to God in prayer, on His level. We don’t need to explain things to God in order for Him to get a better understanding of what’s really going on in your life.

Nor do we need to pray complicated prayers in order to impress God. You may be able to impress other people when you pray, but we don’t need to try to impress God.

*Prayer should not be complicated.*

**(2) Prayer should be From the heart:** A prayer list is fine to give us direction and to remind ourselves of the issues of importance we need to bring before the Lord. But most importantly is what is on our heart. Why am I concerned? Why am I anxious? Why are you worried or fearful? Some Christians are like: “well you shouldn’t worry. It’s a sin to worry. If you are afraid its simply lack of faith”. Well all I know is that Scripture invites us to “cast all our cares upon Him, for HE cares for you.”(1Pet.5:7)

**Psa 55:22** ESV Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

If we never worry, we would never have any worries to cast upon Him. If we were never fearful, we'd never have any motivation to go running to Him for help or safety.

*Prayer should be from the heart. And Prayer should be simple and Uncomplicated.*

**(3) Prayer should be an exercise in Humility:** If we were always over confident and fully self-assured, we may never allow ourselves to humbly come before our Father in heaven, as a child comes into the presence of its father, seeking Him and His resources in our time of need. Whether in fear, in worry, in weakness or in time of any need, prayer is the need of the moment..

**Psa 40:17** ESV As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!

Humbly coming before God in prayer does NOT mean we don't approach His throne boldly. If we were proud and self-reliant then our boldness would be arrogance. But in our humility - fully aware of our own weakness and need; we can boldly approach the throne of Grace,' knowing full well we don't deserve anything, but that He is ready to give us the grace and mercy in our time of need. (Heb.4:16).

*Prayer should be an exercise in humility.*

**(4) Even the smallest of prayers should be presented to God with an attitude of Desperation.** If we aren't praying with a sense of desperation, then we may be suffering from sense of being "disconnected" from the reality of our own needy state. We must never harbor the idea that; "I have everything under control". This is a small prayer request. Its not an issue of desperation, but just wanted to be sure I covered all my bases."

Prayers of Desperation, are prayers that God is ready to answer. Even the smallest of prayer concerns should be prayed with an attitude of... "Lord, even though it's a small thing, it is out of my control. If you don't work here, then nothing good will come of this. So Lord we are desperate for you to hear us and to help us, even in this seemingly small

THE NARROW WAY  
request.”

*\* “How much things matter to us, may determine how much we really pray about it”. And how much we really spend praying about something, may indicate how important it is to us.”*

If its an important matter to us, then we should take it to the Lord in prayer, regardless of how small or insignificant it may seem.

**Psa 91:1-2 KJV** He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (2) I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

The Secret Place is an awareness of the holy, abiding presence of God. The Secret place is not a confidential place, but an intimate place. A time and place or attitude without pretense. A place where the most important thing is to meet with our heavenly Father.

**ILL)** Susannah Wesley had 25 brothers and sisters. She had 19 children of her own, 2 of whom were Jonathan and Charles Wesley. The story is told that when Susannah Wesley needed to pray, she would go sit in the corner and would pull her apron up over her head, and that became her “secret place” or time out, alone in the presence of God in prayer.

**Psa 31:19-20 ESV** (19) Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind! (20) In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.

Regardless of the severity of the circumstances that may drive us to prayer and leave us with a sense of desperation; It will be worth it, because it drives us into the presence - the secret, intimate place of the presence of our Father who is in heaven. Whenever we are empty, we come to God and in His presence is the abundance of His Goodness, which He has stored up, ready to distribute it or impart to those who have simply, sincerely, humbly and desperately run to Him, to take refuge in Him.

**1Co 2:9-10 ESV** But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those

who love him"-- (10) these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

The secret place is more of a focus of the mind, rather than our unknown location. As King David and the Apostle Paul well knew; Prayer in the secret place of the presence of the Lord, can yield unexpected blessings in this life, as well as eternal rewards in the life to come.

*Even the smallest of prayers should be presented to God with an attitude of Desperation.*

*Another Pitfall of prayer is that it can be an empty place.*

***Empty repetitions / more words (6;7-8***

Empty repetitions may originate from discouragement, feeling as though God does not hear or that he is too distant to answer or that God is delaying because He is not interested.

**Mat 6:7** "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.

**(i.) repetitious prayers (v7**

\* Rote. Reading others prayers without making them our own prayers. Repeating the same requests over and over. Reading the same prayers or reciting the same prayer. "The Lord's Prayer" can be the most *meaningful* prayer, but can also be a *meaningless* prayer if we read or recite without engaging our mind and spirit when we pray it.

**(ii.) Many words (v7**

\* Filling up our prayers with words like we fill up our earthly conversations. Lots of words, with little meaning or importance.

**ILL)** In school we had to write papers with a certain minimum requirement of words. So you write all you can think to write for your paper, only to realize you are a couple hundred words short of the minimum requirement. So you begin to go back and attempt to add more descriptions, more adjectives, more conjunctions, more flowery words, maybe even a rabbit trail or two in attempts of making the paper longer, even though you don't really have anything more of real importance to say.

Sometimes we may do something similarly in prayer, hoping that more words will do the trick and get the response from God that we were looking for. However it can become useless and empty words which are unnecessary and ineffective in prayer. Empty repetitions and many words are often pitfalls in our prayer practices.

When we talk about Practicing Proper Prayer or Practicing our Righteousness in the area of prayer- this may be THE most important part.

### **God Already knows.... (6:8)**

\* This may be the most bewildering and yet most comforting aspect of prayer. That is, the fact that God already knows. He is All-Knowing, yet he invites us to come unto Him; pray; seek him; spend time in his presence; cast all our cares upon Him; pour out our hearts to him.

**Psa 62:5-8 KJV** (5) My soul; wait only upon God; for my expectation is from him. (6) He alone is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. (7) In God, is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. (8) Trust in him at all times; you people; ***pour out your heart before him***: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

We are given the invitation to pour out your heart before Him.. And yet... God already knows what is on our minds before we even ask.

**Mat 6:.** (8) Do not be like them, **for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.**

How mysterious is that?! We are invited to pour out our hearts to Him, and we are assured that He already knows what we need or what is troubling us, before we even pray to Him about it. I firmly believe that once we begin to grasp this promise; that the sense that we need to say **more**, or to attempt to even pray aloud if at all, is really of secondary importance, compared to simply being in the presence of the Lord with an attitude and awareness of the abiding presence of God. Prayer can become a result, of filling our minds on the goodness of the Lord and focusing our thoughts on the greatness of our God.

When we can't come up with the right words, or adequate expression, what do we do? It's not what **we** do, but what God's Spirit of Holiness **does for us**.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Through faith in our Lord Jesus, we are citizens of a Heavenly Kingdom and we are children of the King of that kingdom. Consider this passage on prayer from God.

**Rom 8:26-27 KJV** Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (27) And he that searches the hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.

There are times when no words may be in order. We are promised that God's Spirit of holiness helps us in our prayers, when we simply cannot find the words to express what we feel or when we just need to be quiet before the Lord and allow His Spirit to fill our thoughts, sooth our spirits, comfort our souls and prays on our behalf.

God praying for us – we can't go wrong with that. We are going to close in Silent Prayer. During this minute of silence, let your mind and heart draw near to God; allow your thoughts and cares be brought to Him for Him to receive, sift through and answer as He knows best.

**SERIES:** SERMON ON THE MOUNT: "The Narrow Way"

Nov.22, 2020

**Sermon Title:** "The Prayer of the Righteous"

**TEXT:** Mat.6:9-15

**MATTHEW:** 'Thy Kingdom Come'

**COMMUNION**

**Theme :** The Test of our Purity, in the Practice of our Righteousness"

*So Jesus begins by addressing The Practice of our Righteousness. Or the Living out of our faith.*

**Mat 6:9-15** ESV 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.

## THE PRAYER OF THE KINGDOM (6:8FF)

\* This has been referred to as "the Lord's Prayer"; The Disciple's Prayer; even a "Sinner's Prayer". In fact I think we can rightfully refer to this prayer as "anybody's prayer" that means business with God!

**Mat 6:9ff (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.

## An Outline for Properly Practicing Prayer (v9)

In May we covered the Lord's Prayer with Alex Konya from Hungary and it was a fabulous study.

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." – A.W. Tozer

This is a perfect prayer for the pagan unbelieving sinner; outside of the family of God and on his or her way to eternal separation from God. Should the Father draw them and the Holy Spirit convict them; this prayer – prayed from the heart would be effective in coming to God in faith and repentance; and as a prayer to fully trust in Jesus as Gods' Son

**(i.) “Our Father in Heaven...” (6:9)**

This Prayer Acknowledges God as Father & Ruler of all of creation (v9) It is often our need or concern that drives us to prayer. We are faced with an issue like the CoVid; The Election; the Destruction of our nations cities; health or danger or crisis in the life of a loved one; Growing hatred or Racism in our country; Even the rejection of God by so many, and by so many of our nations politicians and/or leaders.

The emphasis in this phrase is on “relationship” with God; not titles; not authorities, not position – but on our relationship as children coming into the presence of our Loving, Eternal, Father in Heaven.

“What comes into our minds when we think about God, is the most important thing about us.” – A.W. Tozer

Another detail of significance is the use of the plural form of “our” Father. It indicates this is a good prayer focus in corporate prayer together, as a family of children, joining together in prayer, as we approach OUR Father. The prayer itself reminds us, that we are not in this alone. It reminds us of the multitudes of Believers around the world who are part of our own family, though we cannot see them.

So how we view God, may determine when and if we come to him in prayer and whether or not we have any faith at all in his ability to do anything that could possibly help us, in “**OUR**” time of need.

**(ii.) “Holy is your name....” (v9b)**

This is Confession of God as Holy, and an awareness of or own sinfulness (v9b). Properly thinking about God will result in properly referring to God or addressing Him in prayer. An awareness of God’s holiness or His uniqueness is important.

**Isa 6:1-4 ESV** (1) In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. (2) Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two



he flew. (3) And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (4) And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

The awareness of Gods' holiness, affected how Isaiah addressed God. It was a proper awareness of the holiness of God that seems to have transformed his prayer life with God. It was also his awareness of the holiness of God that caused him to recognize his own sinfulness and spiritual need before God.

**(iii.) "Your kingdom come, your will be done..."(v10**

This Total Surrender of all to God.

**Mat 6:9ff** (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.**

This is a transition from Acknowledging the God we are addressing into our making our requests known to Him. But this is not so much of a request; but perhaps more of an expression of our utmost desire that above all else; whatever we ask or whatever God may or may not provide – our greatest desire is for God's Kingdom to come – in its fullness. It is also our desire and for His will to be fully accomplished on earth, in our family, in our community, in our country; but most of all Lord start here – in my own personal heart and life.

**"Pray like this..."** refers not only to the words themselves, but the awareness of God and ourselves; the attitude of all our needs before our Father who knows what we need, before we even utter our request. **Pray like this** in humility and **Pray like this** in the desperate circumstances of our own personal need.

**(iv.) "on earth as it is in heaven...."(v10b)**

\* Total life goal - to glorify God in all things. My will aside. My preferences aside. My plans aside.

**(v.) "Give us this Day our daily bread...(v11**

This indicates "Total physical Dependence in this life" on God for all things. We don't merely need God in regard to the HereAfter, but we

need God for this very moment and the next in this present life.

Also I see this as a request for needs, not wants.

**Mat 6: (8)** Do not be like them, *for your Father knows what you **NEED** before you ask him.*

Oh, He knows what we want also, but the idea in Mat.6:8 is that God is already in the process of addressing our needs, to provide for us. This is not necessarily the case for God preparing to give us everything we ask for or everything we want. That is the Santa Clause perspective of God. God exists to fulfill my heart's desire. I don't think most people think that, but it can be how we sometimes pray.

**(vi.) “Forgive us...” (v12)**

Here is a section of the prayer that those outside and inside the family of God need to be familiar with. I think, as Christians, we tend to gloss over this part, as “the part that doesn't really apply to me”, what with me being a child of God and all.

The Apostle John wrote to the church:

**1Jn 1:8-10** ESV If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

People outside the family of God who have just come to realize their need for Christ, may pray “Forgive us...” in view of their sins which have separated them from God and will keep them separated for all eternity. For the church – the family of God, this may be prayed under the conviction of the Holy Spirit for the sins we commit that quench the Spirit, transgressions against God's known law, or some violation His holiness and offends the heart of our Loving Heavenly Father. So we may ask for forgiveness for our sin of offending our Father.

Here we see a concept of condition in our prayer. Our prayer should demonstrate a Seeking of Forgiveness, while evidencing inner change of

heart in approaching God. (v12)

**Mat 6: (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.

I think sometimes as Christians, we tend to look for a “loop hole” in vs.13 & 14, rather than looking for the sins that may enter into our minds and hearts and seeking a fresh repentance and fresh forgiveness. It doesn’t mean we lose our salvation; but neither does it mean we minimize our own personal need for forgiveness.

I refer to this as “the Golden Rule” of seeking Forgiveness

**Mat 7:12** ESV "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

\* Read. Mat.18:21-35 and how we are to forgive others.

So God’s forgiveness of us, is conditional upon our forgiveness of others? It’s like God is saying: “I’d like you to be willing to do for others, what you are asking me to do for you.” Are you?

**Col 3:12-13** ESV Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, (13) bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, ***forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.***

Grudges, Resentment, Maybe even Revenge have no place in the family of God, nor in the heart of any of His praying children.

**(vii.) “Lead us not into temptation” (v.13)**

This is Acknowledging the Supernatural world and our need of Supernatural help and direction from God.

**Mat 6: (13)** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

We need to be free of evil which can come from self, the flesh or the devil. -Free from the source of evil, from the effects of evil, from the bondage of evil or from the temptation, deception and destruction of evil.

Oh God, “Don’t allow us to be tempted”. Don’t allow us to fall into sin, but protect us and deliver us from evil or from the Evil One, being Satan. HE is the Deceiver. The Destroyer. The Liar. The Thief. The Tempter.

### **Return to the Warning (6:14-15 ((ref.v12**

**Mat 6:14-15** (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.

These are not directly sins towards God, but sins or offenses toward one another. When someone is open to forgive others; the wrongs done against them; then you know their heart maybe ready to truly believe and to truly be forgiven. When we forgive others, we demonstrate that the character of Christ and His kingdom are at work, ruling our hearts and attitudes.

**CONCLUSION:** Motive is everything in prayer. Motive is everything. Are we asking God to deal mercifully with us, when we are not willing to deal mercifully or graciously with those around us?

This is the point God wants to bring us all to; that is, the point of Christian forgiveness.

*So Jesus begins by addressing The Practice of our Righteousness. Or the Living out of our faith.*

Now we come to our text for this morning.

**Mat 6:1-15** ESV (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. -----

**Mat 6:16-21** ESV (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. (19) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

## **FASTING – FEASTING ON GOD**

\* John Piper makes this statement about Fasting: "Fasting is the exclamation point at the end of the sentence: "God, I Need you and desire you more than anything else in the world." – J.Piper

### **Define**

\* I think it significant that Jesus does not say "if" you fast; But seems to assume that fasting takes place intermittently in the lives of His disciples. But **WHEN** you fast...

To Fast is to do without food for a period of time. Fasting can be at different levels for different reasons. We can fast during the daylight hours; we can fast for one meal; we can fast for 24 hours or 9.5 hours. 33.3 hours.

We can fast or do without food completely. We can go without caffeine for a day or chocolate. You can go on a liquid fast or a vegetable and water fast. We can fast from TV or social media. We can fast from fishing or bowling or gaming.

“A fast is what we make it”, because the greater issue is not necessarily how long, etc. but the greater issue is .... Guess what? Motive! Why are you fasting? What is concerning you? What might we be seeking God for??

## The Purpose of fasting

### \* To Get God’s attention.

**Mat 6:17** ESV (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.

God – meeting with you, communing with you is the greatest desire of my heart right now. My greatest need is to remove all obstacles that would hinder my fellowship or distract my attention from you, that I might be fully focused on your presence and desensitized to the regular distractions in my life.

With all the CoVid sanitizing that is taking place, I was thinking that we might look at fasting as a time of inviting God to “sanitize” us from the contamination of sin, temptations, lesser desires, simple distractions, worldly pursuits; and from the time killing and attention consuming influences around me- so we can focus more on God.

So, we might view fasting and saying “no” to food or whatever for a time, while we seek to feast on the presence of our Heavenly Father, as a manner of sanitizing our inner life from the world’s contaminations.

## EXAMPLES OF FASTING

When Esther was seeking God’s protection as she planned to approach the king; she called the Hebrew people to fast for the situation. No doubt it was referring to both prayer AND fasting.

**Est 4:15-17** ESV Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, (16) "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a **fast** on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." (17) Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

King Jehoshaphat was petrified when he received news that 3 armies were gathering and combining their forces to come against the Jews.

**2Ch 20:3** KJV And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a **fast** throughout all Judah.

When David heard of the death of King Saul and his son Jonathan in battle, He called a fast to grieve the loss of their king.

**2Sam. 1:11-12** ESV (11) Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. (12) And they mourned and wept and **fasted** until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son and for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

In times of worship the NT church would fast, just in worship.

**Act 13:1-2** ESV Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (2) While they were worshiping the Lord and **fasting**, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

In the NT, the church fasted as they commissioned their servants and sent them out.

**Act 13:3** ESV Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Our Lord Jesus Himself, engaged in fasting; especially prior to beginning His Messianic ministry.

**Luk 4:1-2** ESV And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness (2) for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he **ate nothing** during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.

And following the Lord's example, prayer and fasting for exceptional ministry tasks may be crucial in productive service for Christ.

**Luk 4:13-14** ESV And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. (14) And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

These are just a few mentions of “fasting” in Scripture.

I'd **challenge** you to do a search in your Bible program and search for the various referencing to “fasts” in the Bible.

I have a link on our webpage, on what may be [all the references to fasting in the Bible](#). Wednesdays is our church's day for prayer and Fasting for the health and growth of our Church and the overall advancement of God's Kingdom rule.

## THE WARNINGS ON FASTING

### Don't call attention to your fasting

**Mat 6:1-15** ESV (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. -----

**Mat 6:16-21** ESV (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.

**Don't waste your life on gathering earthly rewards,  
and miss the greatest of all rewards in heaven.**

**Mat 6:20-21** (19) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.



**v.19) “Don’t lay up”** – compile, hoard or heap up. It’s the idea of striving, desiring, getting, saving, amassing treasures things and accolades on earth. Because guess what. Earth is as far as they go. You can’t take these with you. And contrasted with heavenly rewards – you may never know in this life what your true treasures will be in heaven; until you step into heaven. No eye has seen what God has prepared for those who love Him, Serve Him, Desired Him, lived for Him.

Your epitaph or eulogy, nor the praises of people in this life, can ever communicate nor can their minds fathom, what God has in store for you in heaven.

**(21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Our Treasure is our pursuits or our heart’s greatest desire. God’s desire is to reward His servants for a life of devotion and sacrifice, set fully apart for Him. Our Motives can ruin a lot of that.

**SERIES:** SERMON ON THE MOUNT: "The Narrow Way"

Dec.6, 2020

**Sermon Title:** "Treasures in Heaven"

**TEXT:** Mat.6:19-24f

**MATTHEW:** 'Thy Kingdom Come'

**Theme :** The Test of our Purity, in the Practice of our Righteousness"

*So Jesus begins by addressing The Practice of our Righteousness. Or the Living out of our faith.*

## **INTRODUCTION:**

So Jesus has brought us through the Sermon on the Mount, addressing and correcting the improper practice of our Righteousness or how we live out our Christian life in a manner that pleases or displeases God.

He addressed giving, praying and fasting with impure motives that seeks to impress others rather than communicate and commune with God.

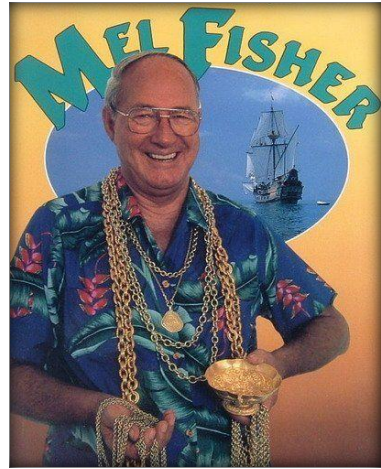
Now he address the larger generality of living out our Christian faith and its eternal ramifications.

**Mat 6:19-24** ESV "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (22) "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, (23) but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! (24) "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

I like treasure hunting stories. Mel Fisher was a chicken farmer turned scuba diver and treasure hunter. He spent much of his treasure hunting days searching for the sunken Spanish Galleon, the Atocha, along with 8 other ships from same flotilla that all sunk in a storm in 1622. His motto was: "This is the Day!"

### THE NARROW WAY

In 1985 he and his team discovered the Atocha in 20' of water just off the Florida keys. They were anchored along a coral reef and with underwater metal detecting equipment, searched the ocean floor for any sign of Gold or other metal objects. One day one of the divers was swimming from one side of the coral reef over the top of the reef and to the other side, when the metal detectors went off. They discovered the coral reef was coral covered gold bricks stacked like cord wood on the ocean floor. With a value of \$450 million dollars, they had found the Atocha mother lode.



That however, was only about half of what the ship was believed to be carrying and the other half of the ship had still not been found. And 7 of the other Spanish Galleons also remained undiscovered at that time.



I love intriguing and captivating stories of sunken treasures and the people who find them. It kind of makes you want to try your hand at treasure hunting.

Also, the largest gold nugget ever discovered was discovered above ground. That sort of makes you wonder about that large lump in your back yard, right? It makes me want to go out a buy a metal detector.

We ended last week's message with Jesus' warning...

**Mat 6:21** ESV For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also

*Jesus gives us a warning concerning false treasures.*

## WARNING OF WEALTH, DESIRES AND IDOLS (6:19-21)

\* What would you say is your treasure? What is your greater purpose or motive in life? How do you spend your days? What takes up most of your time?

**Mat 6:19-20** ESV (19) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,

These words of Jesus can haunt us. They can cause us to think, evaluate, be convicted or sense the need to reconsider our personal priorities and treasures. We are warned about “false treasures”. Some of these may be idols, worldly wealth or even sinful desires or pursuits. It could even simply be living a life with no focus or interest in God or His ways. These would be false treasures or counterfeits, because, while important to us on earth, they hold no value in God’s eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

### **Warning... “Do Not...” (6:19-20)**

\* Do not lay up... treasures on earth. This refers to storing up, so as to accumulate something of which we trust in or secretly worship as our greatest treasure. It doesn’t seem to be an issue of “saving” to purchase or necessarily even about the future or retirement. But it seems intended to address things we do in this life, that we feel we may hope to get good credit for in the reward or judgment in the last days.

Do we remember this aspect that Jesus address in the “Lord’s Prayer”? “Give us this day our - - what?” Give us this day our daily bread. It’s an issue of daily trusting and seeking God’s provision for each and every day for each and every need; even bread. Jesus will revisit this in the following verses.

#### **(i.) Treasures on earth...**

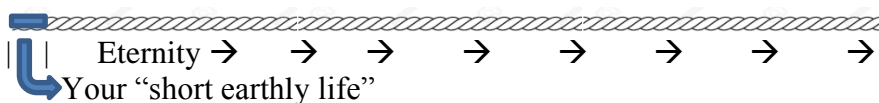
What does treasures on earth refer to? Perhaps it is unknowingly putting inappropriate importance in:

- **Earthly Possessions** – These are things we value in this life that has no value in the eternal kingdom.
- **Temporary Positions** – This could be an achieved level of authority

or title or position that causes us to see ourselves as rising to a cut above most other people.

- **Human Pursuits** – These could be things, endeavors or plans that may not be sinful, but attract our attention and take up our time so that we are distracted from greater involvement in the things God has created us and saved us for. Not necessarily sin, but keeps our focus off things that really matter for eternity. (In Heb. 12:1, there are sins and there are distractions.)
- **Passing Posterity** – This is our perceived influence on the world during our lifetime. Things you have done or accomplished that may cause your name to live on. The idea is your influence is felt and reputation is not soon forgotten.

### LifeLine (rope)



This LifeLine represents our brief life in light of eternity; the things we spend our days focused on. Jesus urges us to not allow earthly treasures to rule our lives. We must not allow temporary passing distractions to keep us consumed, tired and disinterested from genuine kingdom issues or ministry. These are things that become our greatest interests or desires.

We tend to spend this small amount of “short earth life”, focused on this small amount “short earth life”, rather than spending this brief amount of “short earth life” preparing for the rest of “*eternity*”.

### **(ii.) Earthly Treasures Quickly & easily disappear & are gone for eternity.**

These are things that can deteriorate, rot, rust or be eaten away by insects, or even stolen by thieves. These things are not permanent or of lasting value. These refer to things that will one day be judged as worthless or a waste; that which represents empty and vain

accomplishments and would be viewed as loss. These could even be wasted opportunities to do for God or for others that which could be part of our eternal reward when we stand before God and give account in heaven.

This would include good things done with impure motives, such as giving to be seen, praying to be heard and fasting to be admired by others. Those motives receive their reward in this life, but leave a void in the life to come.

We are urged... “Do not spend the short time in this earthly life, focusing on interests and desires of this earthly life. It will be a waste!

**Admonition: “Do...”**

\* Here is what we are urged to do; what we are urged to be our focus in this earthly life.

**Mat 6:20** ESV (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal

**(i.) Treasures in heaven...**

This would be purposefully practicing our Righteousness in a manner which was pleasing to God, both in act, as well as in motive. These are things done in the name of our Lord Jesus, whether great or small, but done for the honor of the Lord and for the sake of helping others and/or in some way, advancing His eternal kingdom work. These are things that will bring eternal rewards from our Father in heaven.(6:1,4,6,18)

**(ii.) Motive for everything I do**

The Apostle Paul gives us an appropriate guideline for proper motive for all that we might do as a Christian.

**1Cor. 10:31** ESV So, whether you eat or drink, or *whatever* you do, do all to *the glory of God*.

This is attitude and motive for every deed, every ministry activity, every word spoken in any context; even every thought or intent of the heart can be measured by this principle.

## WARNING OF ATTENTION AND ATTRACTION (6:22-23)

\* Whatever we do –whatever the reason or motive will determine our inner most desires, whether worldly for self or heavenly for God.

**Mat 6:21-22** (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (22) "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light,

### The Treasure & the Heart (v21)

\* Treasure refers to what gets our attention and keeps it. It can be that which constantly occupies our thoughts.

\* It may be a treasure or interest that captivates our heart and grows to an affection and even our greatest desire.

**Mat 6:21** (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This is a good marker to help evaluate our hearts, and we are the only one's who can accurately do that, with the Spirit's help. We can be warned by others, but no one else, other than God who searches the heart and knows the mind, can evaluate our inner most feelings.

These earthly treasures are interests, fleshly focuses or desires. These oppose the eternal heavenly interests of God for His kingdom and can cause us to forfeit our heavenly rewards in the life to come.

Again; we can spend so much time focused on our temporary stay in this life, that we fail to utilize our time wisely so as to adequately prepare for the life to come and the rewards we could receive from the Lord.

### The Eye and the body (v.22)

**Mat 6:21-22** (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (22) "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is **HEALTHY**, your whole body will be full of light,

#### (i.) Eye is light and life

Eye is the gateway for the body. We think the mouth would be, but its the eye. What captures the attention of your eye, is what ends up going

through your mouth and into your stomach. What your eye sees and desires, is what it pursues.

When The Bible refers to your body, it is often referring to the entire person; the entire YOU. Inside your body, is housed everything you are; your personality, your interests, thoughts, desires, wants, concerns fears, evaluation of your life experiences – and the formulation of your choices, your purpose and your goals.

Its all held inside this carcass. Your brain – thoughts. Your heart – life.

So the psalmist wrote: Bless the Lord, Oh, My Soul and ***all that is within me***, bless His holy name” (Ps.103:1)

### **(ii.) Eye is clear and healthy**

If your eye is clear, then it filters into the body. Like a window allowing the light of life into your body. If your eye is healthy or doing what it was designed to do...

### **The Danger of a Bad eye**

**Mat 6:23** (23) but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

### **(i.) If your eye is bad, unhealthy,**

If the light of the eye is “darkness” – or if that which we focus on and allow to enter in through the eye and make its way into our heart; if it is fleshly, self focused and not God honoring or glorifying, then the “light” of the eye is viewed as “darkness” into the soul.

### **(ii.) How Great is the Darkness**

How great is the Darkness. How great is the Deception. How great is the Destruction. How Great is the Disappointment especially on judgment day. Oh, one day on evaluation day before God, we will give account before Him of every deed, every thought and every desire, whether good or bad, whether light or darkness, whether pure or impure motives. And at that time, rewards will be dispensed or withheld.



I have some personal recommendations for the Best focus of this time in this life.

**(1) Be certain of your eternal destination.** Where will you spend eternity? Whatever your situation or our present circumstances, you are partially responsible for what happens next. If you are driving to work, you are responsible to get gas. If it is snowing, you are responsible to slow down. If you are lost, you are responsible to get a map or GPS and determine what you need to do to get back on the right path to get where you need to go.

**(2) Trust Jesus Christ** as your Savior NOW. John 3:16.

It is your responsibility to receive Christ now while you have the opportunity. If you choose to reject Jesus Christ today, then you alone are responsible for that.

**(3) Be growing in your faith** and in your knowledge and obedience to God's word. Each of us is responsible before God for that. This "Narrow Way" is a life long journey, full of trials and troubles, but also full of opportunities to store up treasures in heaven.

**(4) Determine in your heart to bring** as many people with you, along your journey, as is humanly and heavenly possible. It is our responsibility to not waste our lives; to not waste the opportunities God has given us; to fulfill His calling and purpose for each one he has created and each one he has saved.

In 1998, Papa Mel Fisher died. Here's the wild thing. Do you know what happened to his treasures? Nothing! Its right where he left it. As near as we can tell, he took none of it with him.

All the tombs of all the pharaohs of Egypt - all their artifacts and treasures that were buried with them to take to the after-life – except what vandals have destroyed and grave robbers have stolen – all those treasures are still in their tombs. They have taken none of it with them.

All the Chinese emperors who buried Imperial warriors, valuables, tools,

even large buried ships and supplies to go with them into the afterlife, are all still there with them.

We cannot take our earthly treasures with us. And on the other hand, we cannot imagine the treasures God has for us – awaiting us on the other side for living as Children of the **His** Kingdom of Heaven as we journeyed along this Narrow Way.

It is our responsibility to live each day of “this life” for Christ as we prepare for eternity and store up our rewards in heaven. Once we arrive home, we’ll never regretting seeking the Lord first.

# ***Don't close this booklet yet***

*without considering this all important question.*

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## **Is Jesus Christ the Savior or *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?**

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; --  
*Rom 3:23*

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness  
can only come from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten  
Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but  
have everlasting life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins  
and sent Him to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus  
Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still  
sinners, Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord  
will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he  
gave the right to become children of God,  
- John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are  
truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins and  
citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

## The ABCs

**A** - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

**B** - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

**C** - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as your LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

**Prayer:** Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

**Connect** with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

**Commit** yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

**Heb 10:24-25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

**Act 2:41-42** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:  
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,  
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, [www.christefca.org](http://www.christefca.org)

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*It is our prayer that you find **Jesus Christ** to be...*  
*your highest calling,*  
*your greatest purpose,*  
*your soul's source and joy,*  
*and your all-consuming passion.*

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*May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.*

*-- Downloadable free resources at: [www.christefca.org](http://www.christefca.org) --*

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Christ E Free Church, 19682 Hill Rd., PO Box 619 Saegertown Pa 16433  
[www.ChristEFCA.org](http://www.ChristEFCA.org) (814) 763-2934 [ChristEFree@gmail.com](mailto:ChristEFree@gmail.com)

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