

Matthew 6

Jesus told His disciples in 5:20 that their righteousness needs to surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. In this section of the sermon, Jesus will illustrate just what He means by that. Substantially, Jesus tells His disciples that they need to be righteous for God's sake, not for their own self-promotion. In Numbers 20:1-12, Moses disobeyed God and brought himself glory instead of obeying God and bringing Him glory. Here, Jesus says His disciples need to seek to glorify God, not themselves.

TRANSLATION - 6:1-4:

1 Now take care that your righteousness is not done before men to be seen by them; and if so, a reward you do not have from your Father in the heavens.

2 Therefore, whenever you may do acts of mercy, do not trumpet before you, just as hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, thus they will be glorified by men; truly I say to you, they will receive in full their reward. **3** But doing your acts of mercy, do not let your left [hand] know what your right [hand] does, **4** so that your acts of mercy may be in secret; and your Father seeing in secret will give back to you.

WORDS:

"Take care" (ver. 1) is used 24 times, 6 by Matthew; it means to "pay attention to, care for, devote yourself to." On "righteousness," see 3:15. The verb translated here "to be seen," gives us the Greek word behind *theater*. On "reward," see 5:12. "Reward" is used in this context four times: 6:1, 2, 5, 16. "Acts of mercy" (ver. 2) is all one word and has "mercy" as its root word; it is used 13 times in the NT, primarily in Acts. It means "kind deed, alms, charitable giving." "To trumpet" is a verb, related to the noun. It is used 12 times in the NT (all but two are in Rev.), only here in Matthew. "Hypocrite" is found 17 times, the vast majority in Matthew, concentrated in chapter 23. It means a "pretender" and comes from acting on a stage. The Greek word, transliterated, gives us the English word *hypocrite*. On "synagogue," see "Archaeology" under 4:23. "To be glorified" was first used at 5:16. "To receive in full" is one word, used 19 times in the NT, 5 times in Matthew, three of which are in this text: 6:2, 5, 16. It is a business term. "To give back" (ver. 4) was first used at 5:26.

PARALLELS:

There are no parallels to 6:1-6 in the Gospels.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

God required Israel to serve the poor (Deut. 15:11; Prov. 3:27-28).

COMMENTS:

Jesus gives a statement of summary in verse 1 that acts of righteousness (specific acts of obedience, fulfilling God's expectations of mankind) ought not to be done "to be seen" by men. If we do so, we will have no reward from our Father in heaven. In the subsequent verses, Jesus will give three examples of such righteousness: giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting. These were three acts of righteousness which were prominent among the Jews of Jesus' day. Back in 5:13-16, Jesus said that His disciples need to let their lights shine so others can see their good works and glorify the Father in heaven. Here, He says that praise from men ought not to be the motivation for our good works. Bringing honor to the Father should be the highest purpose.

Notice that Jesus identifies God as "your" Father in heaven. While God was identified as Father in the OT, it was not His primary designation among the Israelites. It will become so with Christians, through their relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Also, while God does not have gender (Luke 24:39), it misrepresents God's representation of Himself to suggest He has no gender or sexuality. God *a/ways* has chosen to present Himself in masculine terms with

masculine pronouns. If He uses feminine ideas, they are scarce. Matthew records God being called “heavenly Father” some twenty times. Jesus uses the term “Abba,” an Aramaic word for “Father,” which was adopted by early Christians: Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6. There is no evidence of anyone before Jesus using this term for God. While it carries an idea of intimacy, it should not be confused for the term “Daddy” in modern English. We still need to realize that God transcends man’s world and is holy. Terms of respect ought to be used with the Father.

The first act of righteousness is “acts of mercy,” where “mercy” is the root word and the idea is giving to those in need, to the poor. There is no evidence that the Jews sounded trumpets when they gave, at any time. The receptacles in the temple for contributions were shaped like horns so some suggest that was the idea behind Jesus’ comment (cf. Luke 21:1-2). It is clear that He is speaking figuratively, that His children should not sound trumpets, when they give, in order to draw attention to themselves. Jesus identifies “hypocrites” as those who give to be seen by men. That is, they want people to think that their hearts are right with God, but in reality their hearts are wrapped up in themselves. Sounding their trumpets in the synagogues and in the streets, when they give, will be all the glory they receive. That will be the extent of their reward, what they receive in this life.

In verse 3, Jesus emphasizes just how secret one’s acts of mercy should be: the right hand should not know what the left hand is doing. Obviously, the recipient of the act of mercy will know who helped and that individual will glorify the Father in heaven. The Father in heaven sees what is done in secret and He will reward His disciples in the way and manner and to the extent in which He knows is proper.

APPLICATION:

The Jewish leaders are considered hypocrites on a regular basis: Matt. 15:7; 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 5:44; 12:43). Jesus continues to require His disciples to give to the poor: Luke 11:41; 12:33; Acts 3:2; 9:36; 10:2; 24:17; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; Phil. 4:18-19; 1 Tim. 6:18-19; James 1:27. John will talk about “doing righteousness” in 1 John 2:29; 3:7, 10.

TRANSLATION - 6:5-15:

5 And whenever you may pray, do not be like the hypocrites, because they like in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, standing, to pray; thus they will be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have received in full their reward. **6** But you, whenever you may pray, enter into your inner room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father in secret; and your Father seeing in secret will give back to you. **7** And praying, do not blabber just as the Gentiles for they think that in their many words, they will be heard. **8** Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what need you have before you to ask Him. **9** Therefore thus pray, yourselves:

“Our Father, the One in the heavens;
Let your name be holy.

10 Let come your kingdom;
Let be your will, as in heaven, even on earth.

11 Our bread, the daily, give to us today.

12 And forgive us our debts,
as even we ourselves have forgiven our debtors.

13 And do not lead us into temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.

14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, He will forgive also you, your Father in heaven; **15** But if you do not forgive men, neither your Father will forgive your trespasses.

WORDS:

“To pray” (ver. 5) was first seen at 5:44. It is used 85 times in the NT, in Matthew 15 times (6:5-7, 9). See at 5:44. “To like” is the Greek verb *phileo* which is related to the “brotherly

love” type of love. It is used here for the first time, out of 25 occasions. Matthew uses this verb 5 times. While it can be synonymous with *agapao*, the latter verb often suggests *undeserved* love or consideration for someone. “Inner room” (ver. 6) is used only 4 times in the NT: here; 24:26; Luke 12:3, 24. “To blabber” (ver. 7) is only used here in the NT. It means to stammer or to use the same words over and over again. “Gentiles” was first used at 5:47. “Many words” is a single, compound word, used only here. “To be heard” is used 4 times: Matt. 6:7; Luke 1:13; Acts 10:31; 1 Cor. 14:21; Heb. 5:7. It can suggest the connotation of “to obey.” “Be like” (ver. 8) is used 15 times in the NT, often by Matthew (8 times).

On “Father” (ver. 9) as a designation for God, see at Matt. 5:16; on “prayer,” see at 5:44. The verb is used extensively in this context: Matt. 6:5-7, 9. “Let be holy” comes from the verb “to sanctify,” used 28 times in the NT, in Matthew at 6:9; 23:17, 19. On “kingdom” (ver. 10), see at 3:2. “Will” is found 62 times in the NT, 6 times in Matthew. “To forgive” (ver. 11) or “to release” is found 143 times in the NT, beginning at 3:15 where it is translated “permit” or “allow.” It is used 6 times in verses 12-15. “Debts” is found twice in the NT: Matt. 6:12; Rom. 4:4. “Debtors,” a related word to “debts,” is found 7 times in the NT, twice in Matthew (6:12; 18:24). “To lead” (ver. 13) is found 8 times, only here in Matthew. This word for “temptation” is found in Matthew two times (6:13; 26:41), out of 21 times. To “rescue” or “deliver” is found 17 times, in Matthew at 6:13; 27:43. “Trespases” (ver. 14) is one of the synonyms for sin. It is used 19 times in the NT, only in this context (6:14-15) in Matthew. It carries the idea of “missing the mark” (cf. Mark 11:25-26).

GRAMMAR:

“Let be holy” (ver. 9), “let come” (ver. 10) and “let be” are all third-person imperatives, which is the form of a command.

PARALLELS:

The model prayer is also found in Luke 11:2-4.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The text is not referenced here, but God tried to teach Israel to depend on Him daily for their manna (Exo. 16:13-36). In Deuteronomy 8:3-4 (which was quoted by Jesus in Matt. 4:4), God says that He tested Israel to know what was in their heart, to teach them not to live by bread *alone* but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Disciples ought to remember that passage as they meditate on passages here, such as 6:11 and 6:33.

Related to the idea that God knows what we need before we ask Him (6:8), God told Israel through Isaiah (65:24) that He can answer prayer before it is prayed! Israel was supposed to sanctify God’s name (Isa. 29:23; Ezek. 36:20-23). Indeed, one of the Ten Commandments warned Israel to respect God’s holy name (Exo. 20:7). Verses 11-12 reflect Proverbs 30:7-9.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

The “inner room” (ver. 6) was a small room in the interior of the house, perhaps the only room with a key. It might be comparable to our pantry.

COMMENTS:

The second, more extended, discussion of righteous acts is that of prayer. Jesus warns His disciples not to pray “like the hypocrites.” The pretenders choose to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that others would see them pray. Jews had set aside time to pray, everyday, three times, the 3rd hour (9 AM), 6th hour (noon), and 9th hour (3 PM) (Psa. 55:17; Ezra 9:5-6; Dan. 6:10; 9:21; Luke 1:10; Acts 3:1). It would be possible for a pretender of righteousness to schedule his daily activities so that the hour of prayer would happen when he was on the street corner so that he would pray publicly and be seen by men. There is nothing wrong with praying while standing as there are many postures of prayer mentioned in the Scriptures: prostrate, kneeling, sitting, and standing. There is nothing wrong

with praying publicly as the church is commanded to do such (cf. Acts 1:24; 3:1; 4:24-30). There is nothing wrong with repeating oneself while praying sincerely for the same thing (Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 18:1). The issue in verse 5 is that the pretenders pray to be seen by men. Again, Jesus says they have received, in this life, all the reward they will receive.

Instead, Jesus tells His disciples to go into their inner room, close the door, and pray in secret. The Father, who sees and rules from heaven, will see what is done and will reward His disciples in the way, manner, and extent which He knows is best. In contrast to pagans who believe they have to repeat themselves to be heard and / or to manipulate their gods to respond, Jesus tells His disciples not to “blabber” or to use “many words” (cf. the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:26). The Father in heaven is not like pagan gods. Not only can He *not* be manipulated through speaking mantras, but He does not need to be manipulated. He knows what disciples need even before they ask.

Therefore, in order to give His disciples an idea of what content their prayers should have, Jesus gives them an example, verses 9-13. This is not the “Lord's Prayer” as much as it is a model for His disciples to follow; but it is also only a pattern. It would violate His very words in verse 7 for this very prayer to be blabbered from rote memory, repeated without any thought or concern for its true content.

Jesus desires God's name to be sanctified on earth (ver. 9). That happens when God, working through us, sees that His name is guarded as holy. Anything to which God's name is attached should be respected as holy, including His name itself. That means His people, “Christ”-ians, and His church, church of “God in Christ,” should be kept holy. The Father is in heaven, and from there He can rule over the affairs of men, answering prayers for His disciples, even as He is unaffected by the changing of time or space.

John the baptizer preached that the kingdom was imminent (3:2). Jesus also preached that the kingdom was imminent (4:17). Here, Jesus tells His disciples to pray that the kingdom will, in fact, arrive as John and Jesus preached and as God has been planning for millennia. Since the kingdom has been established on the Day of Pentecost (between 31 and 33 A. D.; Mark 9:1; Acts 2:32-35; Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6, 9), it would be appropriate now to pray that the kingdom will spread around the world and God's reign would begin in the heart of each individual person. When the Son comes again, He will turn the kingdom over to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-26). Christians should also pray for the Lord to return quickly (1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20).

Jesus tells His disciples to pray that God's will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. In order for that to be fulfilled, His disciples must obey God's commands in every way possible, and teach those commands to others and they, in turn, must obey God's commands. God's will refers to the obedience He requires as well as the events in history He desired to transpire in order for Jesus' work to be completed.

In verse 11, Jesus turns from praying for God's name, kingdom, and will to man's own needs. Now, Jesus tells His disciples to pray, in faith, that God will provide for their necessities each day. In the first century, common workers received their pay each day. In verses 25-34, Jesus will return to this theme of faith in the midst of physical needs. Here, He emphasizes that His disciples should trust God to provide each day what is necessary for that day. The word translated “today” (ver. 11) might be understood as “necessary” or even “tomorrow.” The point is the same: Disciples are to pray for God to provide for their immediate needs, “today” if the prayer is uttered in the morning, or “tomorrow” if the prayer is an evening prayer. Either way, it is prayer for what is “necessary.”

Forgiveness is the theme of the next verse in the prayer (ver. 12). Here Jesus pictures obedience to God as a debt that man owes God. Failure to obey is failure to pay that debt, which is sin. So Jesus tells His disciples to pray that God will forgive that debt, that disobedience, and Jesus ties forgiveness of His disciples to their willingness to *forgive others* their debts, lack of obedience. Jesus will return to the subject of forgiveness in verses 14-15. See also Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:21-35.

Speaking of sin, verse 13 deals with the subject of temptation, a word which can also be translated “testing.” James will write in James 1:13 that God does not tempt anyone to sin, yet the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Matt. 4:1). God will not tempt man into sin. God led Jesus into the wilderness so He could be tempted *by the devil*, so Jesus could be fully qualified to be man’s high priest (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15-17). But God will *test* man’s willingness to obey Him or obey Satan, as He did Abraham (Gen. 22:1). Jesus’ point, then, here is that disciples should pray that the Father will be with them *through* the temptation and guide them so they will be delivered *from* evil. “Evil” here can refer (as a neuter noun) to evil as an abstract (Luke 6:45; Rom. 12:9; 1 Thess. 5:22), but very real, concept, or (as a masculine noun) to “the” evil one, Satan (13:19, 38; Eph. 6:16; 1 John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:19). Substantially, either option is the same, theologically. There is a popular addition to the Lord’s Prayer, “for Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever,” which does not have support in the oldest Greek manuscripts, but it was apparently added very early. Christian scribes apparently thought it was a good, biblical way to end this model prayer. There is nothing unbiblical about the sentiments in the addition. The thoughts are sustained in other places of the NT.

APPLICATION:

God will not allow Satan to tempt us beyond what we are able to refuse (1 Cor. 10:13) if we, in contrast to Adam and Eve, will have the strength to listen to and obey God, as opposed to Satan. The Lord knows how to deliver His followers (2 Pet. 2:9). Peter calls on Christians to resist the devil in 1 Peter 5:8-9. Paul reinforces the need for us to forgive others in Colossians 3:13.

TRANSLATION - 6:16-18:

16 But whenever you fast, do not be as the sullen hypocrites, for they render unrecognizable their faces thus they will appear to men fasting. Truly, I say to you, they have received in full their reward. **17** But you, fasting, anoint your head and your face, wash, **18** thus you might not appear to men fasting but to your Father, the One in secret; and your Father, the One seeing in secret, will reward you.

WORDS:

“To fast” (ver. 16) was seen in the life of Jesus at 4:2. “Sullen” is found here and at Luke 24:17. “To render unrecognizable” (ver. 16) is used only 5 times: Matt. 6:16, 19-20; Acts 13:41; James 4:14. “Faces” is found 76 times in the NT. On “truly,” see at 5:18; on “to receive in full,” see 6:2; on “reward,” see at 5:12. “To anoint” (ver. 17) is found 9 times in the NT, only here in Matthew. “Head” is found 75 times. It can mean “source or origin,” while in most situations, it refers to the literal head of the body. “To wash” is found 17 times, twice in Matthew (6:17; 15:2). This word for “secret” (ver. 18) is only found here. “To reward” or “to give in full” was first seen at 5:26, 33; 6:4.

PARALLELS:

There are no parallels in the Gospels to this paragraph.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Israelites interpreted “to humble oneself” (Lev. 16:29-31) on the Day of Atonement as fasting; we do not know when they did this. However, the verb simply means to “humble oneself” and does not inherently mean to go without food. The verb “to fast” (to go without food) is used for the first time in Judges 20:26, many years after the Law was given and even then, it is not a command of the Lord. Eventually, as the Israelites tended to focus on *external* rituals rather than *internal obedience*, many fasts were started, for various occasions. There are examples of individuals fasting, groups fasting, and the whole nation fasting. The problem was always that they did not humble their hearts even as they starved their bodies (Joel 2:12-13). Verses 16-17 might reflect Isaiah 58:5.

COMMENTS:

In Jesus' day, the Jews were fasting regularly, apparently twice a week (Monday and Thursday). Other than the fasting in Matthew 4, it does not appear that Jesus fasted during His ministry (see Matt. 11:19). In fact, the disciples did not fast, which brought a rebuke from the Pharisees (Matt. 9:14). Too many pretenders were fasting in order to gain the approval of men. Jesus says that they make themselves "unrecognizable" so that men will "recognize" (He makes a play on the verbs), that they are fasting. Jews could spread ashes on their faces or dirt, to "show" they were penitent or sorrowing. As with acts of mercy and praying, Jesus states that they will receive, in the praise of men, all the reward they will get.

Instead, in order for the disciples of Jesus to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, they should appear externally as if everything is normal. They should anoint their heads and wash their face, acts of normal, cultural hygiene. In this way, they will not appear to men to be fasting, but the Father, who sees in secret and what is done in secret (see Heb. 4:13), will reward those disciples.

APPLICATION:

After the verb "to fast" is used in the Gospel accounts, it is found only in Acts 13:2-3. The noun "fasting" is found only 6 times: Matt. 17:21; Luke 2:37; Acts 14:23; 27:9; 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27. There is no reason to believe, from the NT, that fasting ought to be a major part of Christian life. It surely violates Jesus' intention to set fasts on a calendar, as the Jews did, so that everyone would know one has been fasting. The two places the noun is used in the NT letters (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27), Paul is referring to going without food, but not by his choice.

It is a violation of this practice and the Lord's teaching, to raise money for mission work by fasting. It is also an abuse and misunderstanding of fasting to get other people to change their behavior. Fasting was not practiced in order to get someone else, such as one's country, to repent of their sins. Fasting was done because someone feels guilty for his own sins, or in order to get the distractions out of one's life so he or she can focus on their relationship with God. If one chooses to fast today, these ought to be remembered when one fasts. Paul identifies the "great apostasy" with those who command to "abstain from meats" (1 Tim. 4:1-5).

TRANSLATION - 6:19-21:

19 Stop treasuring to yourself treasure on the earth, where moth and corrosion destroys and where thieves break-in and steal. **20** But treasure to yourself treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do not break-in neither do they steal. **21** For where is your treasure, there will be also your heart.

WORDS:

"To treasure" (ver. 19), the verb, is used 8 times in the NT (6:19-20 in Matthew), while the related noun, "treasure," is used 17 times, first at 2:11. "Moth" is found here (6:19-20) and Luke 12:33. "Corrosion" translates a word that means "consuming." It is used only here in Matthew, out of 11 occasions. "To destroy" is only found 5 times, three of which are in this context (6:16, 19-20). "Thieves" is found 16 times, here (6:19-20) and 24:43 in Matthew. It is the noun form of the verb "to steal" (13 times in the NT; 5 times in Matt.) used shortly. "To break in" is found 4 times (6:19-20; 24:43; Luke 12:39). "Heart" (ver. 21) was first seen at 5:8. The Greek word gives us *cardio*-.

PARALLELS:

This paragraph has its parallel in Luke 12:33-34.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

The verb “break-in” actually means to “dig into,” reflecting the mud or clay which was used to build houses in the first century.

COMMENTS:

Since man is a physical being, he finds it much easier to put his ultimate confidence in what he can see: friends, family, bank account, productivity at work. This success causes him to build up his treasures on earth. There is also the temptation to believe that, since God does bless faithfulness, if we have physical blessings, we believe (automatically) that we have God’s blessings. Whether our lives are obedient to God’s teachings becomes irrelevant.

Here, Jesus warns His disciples not to have that mentality. Treasures on earth can be destroyed by moths (clothes) and by other types of corrosion (like metals; James 5:2-3). Thieves can even break into one’s house and steal one’s belongings. Then where will one’s trust be?

To store up treasures in heaven is to obey God in all areas of life, as much as possible. That obedience, wholeheartedly, shows God that one’s goal is heaven and being in the Father’s presence. When one renders obedience to God, moths cannot destroy it and corrosion cannot destroy it. Thieves cannot steal it. If our hearts are in heaven, that’s where we’ll put our treasures. We’ll put our treasures where our hearts are.

APPLICATION:

Paul warns Christians to not allow themselves to get wrapped up in the pursuit of material wealth (1 Tim. 6:6-8, 17-19). Christians are to set their minds on things above, where Christ reigns (Col. 3:1-2).

TRANSLATION - 6:22-23:

22 The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore if your eye might be sincere, all your body will be radiant. **23** But if your eye may be evil, all your body will be darkened. If, therefore, the light in you is dark, the whole [is] dark.

WORDS:

“Lamp” (ver. 22) was first seen at 5:15; this is its only other usage in Matthew. “Body” was first seen at 5:29-30. “Eye” was also seen first at 5:29. “Sincere” is only used here and at Luke 11:34. In the LXX, it translated the word meaning “perfect” or “complete.” It could suggest undivided loyalty. “Radiant” has as its root word, in Greek, the word “light.” This word is used here and at Matthew 17:5 and only again in Luke 11:34, 36. “Darkness” (ver. 23) is found only at Matt. 6:23; Luke 11:34, 36. Its related word is “dark,” used 31 times, 7 times in Matthew.

PARALLELS:

This paragraph has its parallel in Luke 11:34-36.

COMMENTS:

Jesus continues His theme of keeping one’s life focused in the right direction as he talks about the eyes. Eyes are often viewed as windows into one’s heart and soul. If the eye is sincere and generous, healthy to focus on what is right and good, then the whole body will reflect radiance, the light of the Son in one’s heart.

Yet, if the eye is evil, not generous, focused on material possessions, then the whole body, the whole life, will be directed in the wrong direction (see Prov. 28:22). If the little eye that is in our hearts is darkness, then the whole life will be dark. The word translated “evil” here might refer to stinginess, which was prohibited under the Law (Deut. 15:9) and Prov. 22:9. See also Matt. 20:15.

APPLICATION:

A word related to “sincere” is used in Romans 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13, in the sense of generosity. See also James 1:5.

TRANSLATION - 6:24:

24 No one is able two masters to serve; for either the one he will hate and the other he will love; or one he will be devoted and the other, he will despise. You are not able God to serve and mammon.

WORDS:

“To serve” (ver. 24) is used 25 times in the NT; only here in Matt. It is the verb related to the noun “slave,” so that this word suggests the idea of serving as a slave. “To hate” was first seen at verse 43. The verb “to love” here is *agapao*, self-less love. “To be devoted” is used 4 times in the NT: here; Luke 16:13; 1 Thess. 5:14; Titus 1:9. “To despise” is used 9 times in the NT, twice in Matthew (6:24; 18:10). “Mammon” is an Aramaic word for wealth, riches, and money. The Aramaic word is used 4 times: here; Luke 16:9, 11, 13. Since Matthew preserves the Aramaic word, it apparently continued in use among Greek-speaking Jews.

PARALLELS:

See Luke 16:13 for a parallel.

COMMENTS:

While it is possible to have more than one owner / master, it is not possible to serve two masters who are leading in different directions. In such a case, one will hate one master but love the other. One will be devoted to one and despise the other. In terms of the physical world versus the spiritual world, Jesus states simply that we cannot serve God and possessions or property or money.

APPLICATION:

To wrap one’s life around the obtaining of possessions is idolatry (Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:5). James also emphasizes that one cannot serve two masters (4:4).

TRANSLATION - 6:25-34:

25 On account of this, I say to you, do not be anxious for your soul, what you will eat [or what you will drink], neither for your body what you will wear. Is not the soul greater than the nourishment and the body, than clothing? **26** You all consider the birds of the heaven, that they do not sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and your Father, the heavenly One, feeds them; are not you rather worth more than them? **27** But which among you, being anxious, is able to add to his age one cubit? **28** And concerning clothing, why are you being anxious? You all think carefully of the lily of the field, how they grow. They do not labor nor spin. **29** But I say to you that neither Solomon in all his glory was not clothed as one of these. **30** But if the grass of the field today is and tomorrow into the oven being cast, God, thus, clothes, not much rather you, little faith ones? **31** Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, What may we eat? Or, what may we drink? Or, with what may we be clothed? **32** For all these things the Gentiles pursue; for does not your Father, the heavenly One, know that you need the whole of these? **33** But seek first the kingdom [of God] and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **34** Therefore, do not be anxious unto the tomorrow, for the tomorrow will be anxious for itself; sufficient for the day [is] its trouble.

WORDS:

“To be anxious” (ver. 25) or to “worry” is found 6 times in this context: 6:25, 27, 28, 31, 34 (twice). It is used again in Matthew only at 10:19. The verb is found 19 times in the NT. “Soul” was first seen at 2:20. “To wear” is the related verb to “clothing” in this same verse. The verb is used 27 times in the NT, three times in Matthew.

“To sow” (ver. 26) is found 52 times, 17 in Matthew. “To reap” is found 21 times, three times in Matthew (6:26; 25:24, 26). “To gather” was found first at 2:4; 3:12. “Barns” was seen first at 3:12. “To be worth” is found 13 times, three times in Matthew (6:26; 10:31; 12:12). “To add” (ver. 27) is found only in this context in Matthew (6:27, 33), out of 18 times. “Age” or “life span” is found here in Matthew, from 8 occurrences. “Cubit” was measured from the tip of the tallest finger to one’s elbow. It could be anywhere from 18”-21”. Here, the word is used figuratively for any type of addition to one’s life. The word is used 4 times: Matt. 6:27; Luke 12:25; John 21:8; Rev. 21:17.

“Think carefully” (ver. 28) is only used here in the NT. The “lily” is found only here and at Luke 12:27. “Field” is used extensively, beginning in this context (6:28, 30), 36 times in the NT, 17 of those are in Matt. “To grow” is found 21 times, in Matthew, only here and at 13:32. “To labor” is found here and at Matthew 11:28, out of 23 times. “To spin” is found only here and Luke 12:27. It refers to spinning thread to make cloth. “Glory” (ver. 29) was first found at 4:8. “To be clothed or dressed” is found 23 times, five in Matthew (6:29, 31; 25:36, 38, 43).

“Grass” (ver. 30) is found 15 times, three times in Matthew (6:30; 13:26; 14:19). “Oven” is found twice: Matt. 6:30; Luke 12:28. “To clothe” in this verse is different than the verb used earlier. This word is only found in Matt. 6:30; 11:8; and Luke 7:25. “Little faith ones” is a compound word which literally combines “little” and “faith.” This word is only found 5 times: Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Luke 12:28.

“Gentiles” (ver. 32) was first seen at 4:15. It refers to those who are not Jews. “To pursue or seek after” is found 13 times, three times in Matthew: 6:32; 12:39; 16:4. It is a more intensified form of the same word we have translated “to seek” in verse 33 (117 times; 14 in Matthew). “To need” is used 5 times: here; Luke 11:8; 12:30; Rom. 16:2; 2 Cor. 3:1. “Sufficient” (ver. 34) is found three times: here; Matt. 10:25; 1 Peter 4:3. “Trouble” means also “misfortune” or “evil” but not necessarily with spiritual or moral overtones. It is used 11 times, only here in the Gospel accounts.

PARALLELS:

Luke’s parallel is in 12:22-31.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Verse 26 should be read in connection with Prov. 6:6-11. While the Proverbs context is about not being lazy, the application is that if we *work* we will have less reason to *worry*. Solomon was mentioned first at 1:6-7. Matthew will mention him again here and at 12:42. Solomon’s wealth was well known (1 Kings 3:12-13; 10:1-29; 2 Chron. 9:1-28). Luke will mention King Solomon twice (11:31; 12:27) and again in Acts (3:11; 5:12; 7:47). John (10:23) will mention him once. In Proverbs 27:1, the wise man told his audience that they should not boast about tomorrow. The idea of adding *length* to one’s *age* is found in Psalm 39:4-6.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

We do not know what type of lily, or flower, Jesus had in mind (ver. 28). There is an anemone (*anemone coronaria*) that is red and purple, with 10” stalks, which grow with blue iris on the hillsides of the Sea of Galilee.

COMMENTS:

In this last paragraph of the sixth chapter, Jesus focuses on anxiety which prompts us to focus on the physical, the “here and now.” The verb “to be anxious” is found six times in this paragraph. In verse 25, Jesus tells His disciples not to be worried, relative to anything we eat, drink, or wear. To put it simply, life is more than the physical. Remember that in the first century, much more time was spent preparing food, cooking, and cleaning, mending clothes, and other daily chores than is spent today.

In order to illustrate His point, Jesus points to the birds (cf. 10:29). They do not keep a garden, sowing and reaping, and they do not store food into barns, yet the heavenly Father

feeds the birds. Again, when Jesus points out that God is the “Heavenly” Father, He shows that God is sovereign and rules over the whole world, having the ability to provide for His disciples’ needs regardless where they are in life. Humans, God’s disciples in particular, are more valuable than the birds.

When Christ’s disciples are anxious, it cannot add anything to one’s length of life nor to one’s height. We do not know if Jesus has in mind age or height since the text could be interpreted either way. The word translated “age” is translated “height” or “stature” in Luke 19:3. It refers to some such aspect of one’s being. In this case, “cubit” would mean some addition to one’s age or one’s height. Suffice it to say that anxiety does not serve any good purpose.

In verse 28, Jesus points to flowers, lilies, and grass as He talks about anxiety over clothing. He points to the lilies, which do not labor or spin thread to make clothes. In verse 29, Jesus points to the wealth of Solomon, which had become proverbial, that Solomon was not clothed as beautifully as the lilies God Himself has made.

Jesus draws a conclusion in verse 30 that if God clothes the grass of the field, which serves as a fuel source, will He not clothe those who are disciples of Christ? Indeed! To believe otherwise, to be anxious, therefore, is to illustrate a “little faith.” Thus, Jesus calls on His disciples not to be anxious, to worry over food, drink, or clothes. Pagans, who do not have a Father in heaven, “eagerly seek” those types of things. To be anxious, therefore, is to live *as if* there is no God. Disciples have a heavenly Father who knows we have need of these basics of life, before we even ask Him.

On the contrary, Jesus tells His disciples to keep their perspective straight and clear. Verse 33 is another way of saying “treasure up treasures in heaven” (ver. 20) and having a sincere eye (ver. 22). Disciples ought to seek a proper relationship with God and practice the obedient life which God requires for His kingdom. When disciples do that, the Father will see to it that “all these things” (food, drink, clothing) will be available to them. This does not mean that Christians will never suffer loss; sometimes loss comes to Christians through their own poor (though not always sinful) choices, through the poor choices of others, or through random circumstances. Yet, God will see disciples through rough times and provide for them when God knows the time is appropriate (Rom. 8:28).

Jesus draws this chapter to a close by calling His disciples not to be anxious about the future, even the very next day. Tomorrow will take care of its own concerns. Jesus warns His disciples not to borrow concerns from tomorrow to add to the concerns of today. Every day has its own troubles to occupy our minds. When tomorrow comes, God will give us the grace to see it through.

APPLICATION:

James echoes his brother’s thoughts in James 4:13-15 where he teaches Christians to live one day at a time. Christians are still to trust God to provide for their needs so they can avoid covetousness (Heb. 13:5-6). If we would live lives free from anxiety, then we should take everything to God in prayer and leave things in His hands which we cannot control (Phil. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:7).