

Matthew 19-07-28a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 28th of July 2019 and we continue our study in the gospel of Matthew. We'll be picking up this morning in chapter 6, Matthew chapter 6. Let's take a moment as we begin to ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our study, on our intake of the word of God, and hopefully with a view toward its processing and application.

As we saw Thursday night, it's a great thing to receive, but it is more blessed to give than to receive, and it is more blessed to apply than just to hear. So that is our aim, that is our goal, and let's appeal to the Lord's grace and the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that those things will take place. Shall we pray? Father, it is such a wonderful comfort to remember the hands that hold us secure, that provide for our needs.

You look after us and watch over us with tender fatherly care, and it is an assurance and a sense of peace that we have from that fact that is a special gift to us in this age for those of us who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and are uniquely related to you through him. We thank you for our Savior. We thank you for the example that the Lord set on this earth when he walked among us and demonstrated the power that can enable us and equip us for accomplishing your will on this earth and in this life.

We know that he did what he did and was sustained by your spirit and by your word, and these are the same wonderful provisions that have been made for us. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word this morning that God the Holy Spirit will be our teacher, that it will become a part of our thinking, that it will return to our minds and our hearts at the point of application, that it will transform us and renew us and equip us for every good work. We pray these in Jesus' name, amen.

As I said, we're picking up now in Matthew chapter 6. We saw that this message as it is recorded and presented in the gospel of Matthew has structure. It's an interesting question, and I scratched my head over it a little bit this past week, about we know that what we have in the record of the gospels is a summary and a distillation of teaching that took several hours on the part of the Lord. He's speaking in Aramaic.

He's talking to his disciples. There may have been questions. It was frequently a dialogue, as we see in other places in scripture.

And so what we have here is a re-presentation, and that's where we get our word represent. You represent something, you re-present it. It was presented once, you present it again.

This is a re-presentation of a longer and more fulsome Bible class that Jesus gave to his disciples up on this hill. And so this structure is probably designed after the fact. It may or may not be similar to the structure that the Lord Jesus himself used to help his

disciples remember the material.

I suspect that it follows the same outline, mainly because Jesus would have used structure to help his disciples remember it. They remember it according to that structure, and when they present it to us, it reflects that. So I don't think it is a bad idea for us to pay particular attention to structure.

We've seen how helpful that can be in our Psalm study, Psalm 119 most recently, to find those things that are important and to help us to remember it. And regardless of what the original presentation was, this is the one that God the Holy Spirit has for us. So it's helpful to not only try to understand the content, but to try to grasp and keep a hold of the framework, because that is going to help us just as it helped them.

So let's read this chapter 6 together. I'm not going to review chapter 5. We have looked at it in great detail in the past, and by doing so, we have given ourselves a good understanding of the elements, you have heard it said, but I say to you. That was the thematic element in the past, right? Well, we're going to see something similar this time, similar but different.

So let's take a look at it together in chapter 6. It begins here, Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven. This sets the theme for pretty much all of chapter 6. This is the chapter heading, if you will, or the section heading.

And again, I want to emphasize that this was verbal teaching. And when we read it, we would say, well, that would make a great title. But people didn't really think or remember in terms of what did they see on a page.

It was what did they hear. And this is the big idea. Don't do what you do because people are looking.

Now, it's one thing to say it, it's something else to do it. But that's the introduction. And this is the statement of theme for this section.

You can tell from just glancing over chapter 5, that that had a different thematic organization and structure. Jesus was refreshing and restoring a proper view of God's law. This is what you have heard taught about the law, but this is what the law actually means and requires.

And this is the proper way to fulfill it. That was one theme. How do you approach the word of God? What is the means of living in its light and fulfilling it? Here, instead of what do you think about, how do you apply the law of God? This is more in the sense of now, how are you going to live your life having done that? What is your applicational strategy, your philosophy? What should your thinking now be since you've straightened out what the word of God means? The word of God is not requiring righteousness by

works.

It is requiring that your works come from a right heart, a cleansed heart, and a genuine understanding of what God requires. So now we have this applicational set of examples. So take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them.

Your charitable deeds. Otherwise you have no reward from your father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, this is alms in old King James.

Perform your alms or give alms. Anytime I hear that word alms, I hear some long lost thing in some ancient movie where some guy is out there, alms for the blind, alms for the blind. It's put a few coins in my cup, I am needy, and you have the ability to help me, alms.

So in the new King James it says charitable deeds. Don't do your charitable deeds before men, otherwise you have no reward from your father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may have glory from men.

Assuredly I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. So that your charitable deed may be in secret and your father who sees in secret will himself reward you openly.

And you'll notice there is a text note in your new King James on the word openly. It's really not there. Do what you do in secret and your father who sees in secret will himself reward you, period.

Well, we'll talk about this, but just think about it. If Jesus says don't be doing what you do to be publicly rewarded, then why would God turn around and reward you publicly? This would just be a deferred public reward. It is sufficient that it is a from the father.

It doesn't have to be openly. Openly means everybody's going to see it. And that's what Jesus is invading against.

So if there was ever a correction to make in your Bible, this is one of them. Scratch out openly. It is enough that the father is going to reward.

Openly means, oh, and everybody else is going to be dazzled as well. And that's just not even there. And when you pray, verse five, you shall not be like the hypocrites for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets that they may be seen by men.

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. They have received their reward as much pleasure as they think they got from thinking that they've impressed everyone. That's the reward.

But you, when you pray, go into your room and when you have shut your door, pray to your father who is in the secret place. And your father who sees in secret will reward you, period. Scratch out openly.

It is not there. Your father will reward you. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do.

They think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore, do not be like them. For your father knows the things you have need of before you ask him.

In this manner, therefore, pray. Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, period. Scratch out the next three lines.

It's not there. Kingdom power and the glory, as wonderful as it sounds, the amen, not there. Verse 14, for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your father who is in the secret place, and your father who sees in secret will reward you, period. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

And we're going to stop at that point. The first 21 verses, this is a section. It's a complete unit.

And we know this because of the way it is structured, the way it's organized. And it is organized on a principle of three. We're going to have the number three guide us throughout these 21 verses.

So back to the beginning of chapter six, take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them. This doesn't need a lot of elaboration. It is the difference between subjectivity and objectivity.

It is the difference between living life to be well thought of, which is the commonplace in

this world. People want to be well thought of for their appearance. They want to be well thought of for their figure, for their muscles, for their accomplishments, for their degree of financial success, for any one of a number of things.

And it is a conscious decision that we make. It is a strategic decision. It is a fundamental foundational decision.

Why do you do what you do? Are you mainly trying to either satisfy or impress the people around you? Or are you doing it because this is what God in heaven wants? Not a difficult concept. It's straightforward. But notice Jesus begins with take heed.

He doesn't just say, do not do what you do to be seen by men. Do what you do. He says, take heed.

And there's an extra element of caution and warning here. It's one thing to say, don't tangle yourself in the barbed wire. Don't cut yourself on the wire.

It's something else to say, be careful that you don't cut yourself. There is an element of possibility when you warn someone, you can say in the abstract, watch out. But when Jesus says, take heed, this means take extra steps, be especially wary in this regard.

And it tells us that this is a proximate possibility. It's a proximate danger for us. It's an easy temptation to give into.

It's easy to be fooled. It's easy to fool ourselves and to not really examine ourselves and see if what we're doing is being done in faith. We're sometimes not even conscious of the fact that our real motivation here is, well, I'll be well thought of.

Nobody likes to be ill thought of. And all of us at one time or another have been in a situation where even people we don't care about, even people that we don't particularly respect, it still hurts if they think ill of us or if they misconstrue our motives or talk bad about us. And they talk about horses and cattle and various others being herd animals or dogs being pack animals.

And it's kind of sad when you see one horse grazing in a pasture because they're really designed to function in a group. Horses in the wild always organize into a herd. Cattle are comfortable in a herd.

Wolves and such tend to, even though they'll mate for life and so on, there is a pack. There's a pack mentality. There are flocks.

There are schools of fish. In the animal kingdom, we see how interrelated similar birds of a feather flock together and that sort of thing. Well, we're designed to be connected to each other.

I read recently an article about what solitary confinement does to the psyche of people.

They can be fed. They can be not under duress, but they're just isolated.

And isolationism, isolation, not isolationism, that's a political concept, completely different subject. But isolation does weird things to our mind over time. We are built to be connected.

The body of Christ is built to be connected. So with that comes the danger that we begin to be so sensitive to those connections that it begins to guide our motivations and our behaviors. And so Jesus says, take heed.

It's an extra layer of importance in terms of warning that you do not do your charitable deeds. And why would it be charitable deeds? Why would it be the idea of alms? Well, you have the notion of actions that are pretty much required. And then you've got the optional.

We pretty much have to do our jobs. We have to take care of chores. We have to perform a lot of things.

But alms were in the realm of optional. The law did not require the giving of alms. This was something over and above, the open... Lazarus and the rich man.

Right. Yeah. Matthew's mentioning that Lazarus and the rich man as an example.

The guy was out at the gate in a state of need, but the rich man didn't find himself compelled to care for him. It was an option. But of course, you have a couple of different courses of action at that point.

In the best case, he would have looked out for his fellow Israelite. They call him Dives, but that's a made up name after the fact. It's like naming the three wise men.

They named the rich man Dives, which is Latin for something, probably stingy man. But it's a good example because he's faced with a potential there, and he's got three choices. He can either be generous.

He can take him in. He can meet his needs. He can be at the heart of the Good Samaritan.

He can do nothing, which is what he did. Or he could also care for Lazarus, but be sure that everybody saw it and walk Lazarus down the street and take him under his wing and say, look what a generous man I am. Look what I've done for this poor guy with the sores here.

I've taken him up from the dogs, licking them and his need and and he could make a big show of caring for him. So what is our attitude to be? The Lord Jesus says, take heed that you do not. And this is the beginning of a structural situation.

In the last chapter, what did we see? You have heard it said, but I say, you have heard it said, but I say. Well, and depending on how you count them, we saw that seven or eight times. There's going to be a set of six of these coming up in this chapter.

And this is going to be, do not do, but. Do not do this, but do that. Do not do this, but do that.

And this is going to be the refrain, the structural memory aid here. So he says, this is the thematic element. Take heed about your charitable deeds, doing them to be seen by men.

Because if you do it for that reason, you have no reward from your father in heaven. And notice it doesn't say no open reward from your father in heaven. It's no reward.

The father's reward is something we probably have real difficulty even understanding because this is generally going to be blessing in time and reward in eternity. And God will choose the way and the shape. Don't you find it great when someone gives you a gift and you didn't see it coming, but it's a wonderful thing.

And it reminds you that they know you very well. And it wasn't necessarily even something you asked for, or that was sort of an obvious choice, but someone who loves you and knows you really well, figured out a way to do something for you that just warms your heart and makes you appreciate them and the relationship that you have with them above and beyond the gift itself. This is an inkling of the nature of the reward of the father.

It is going to be an expression of his pleasure and his regard for us seeking him and his righteousness first rather than doing what we do to be seen by others. You can imagine if somebody gave you a gift because they were worried about what somebody else thought, they wanted to impress a friend or a relative or a spouse or a parent or a child or something. And so they did something for you, but it wasn't really for you.

It's because they wanted to be in the good graces or be well thought of by somebody else. And how would you feel as the recipient of that action or that gift? You'd feel like, well, I'm just a pawn in a game they're playing with somebody else. I'm just a happenstance.

And it doesn't reflect anything between me and them. They're busy doing something else. And so that's how, in a sense, that's how we can understand what God the Father feels.

If we're doing what we do to impress each other, why would he reward us? Oh, good job in impressing each other. It wouldn't make any sense. So that's the theme.

And now you're going to have the do not, but do in verses two and three. So therefore,

when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet. This continues the metaphorical language that we have in the preceding chapter where Jesus talked about cutting off hands and tearing out eyes and so on.

It isn't just the sounding of a trumpet. You know, can I beat a tambourine or can I wave a flag? As long as I don't sound a trumpet, am I okay? The sounding of the trumpet is a metaphor for calling attention, right? In the same way that cutting off a hand or plucking out an eye is a metaphor for utter separation, utter and permanent separation from something that leads us into sin, right? So this is a part of the context. When you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do.

Now, there may have been people that actually did blow a trumpet in the streets of Jerusalem, but this would be any attention-getting device or any conversational ploy that, oh, I see I'm out of checks because I wrote all of them to this charity and that charity and the other charity, and you bring it up and somehow spill the beans and let it be known that you've done something. This is the sounding of a trumpet. The trumpet is like the hand and the eye.

It doesn't have to be a trumpet. They may have glory from men. The intention is to impress, to be well thought of, to compete with others or to compare favorably with others.

This is keeping up with the Joneses in some case. You're sitting, you know, it's a horrible thing in my mind, and this is just me personally, but if you sit in a church that has pews and they pass a big wooden plate, and it's an open plate. Some churches pass a bag with a handle, and you can have something folded up in your hand.

You stick it down to the bag and let go. It could be a penny or it could be a hundred dollar bill. That's a nice feature.

I'd never seen those bags until I was well into my adult years because in the churches I grew up in, there's always a great big round open wooden plate, and you can tell, you know, the dollar bill or whatever the bill is that's moving in the plate from the last guy, you know exactly what they gave. And it's like, well, gosh, you know, he put in a 20 and I've only got a one or a quarter or whatever. And it is inevitably a distraction at best, and it's a competition at worst.

And if Jesus says you ought to do this in secret, I think, and you're going to pass something, the bag is the way to go. That's just me. But it seems to me to be more scriptural.

It's nobody's business. If I am doing this as unto the Lord and not unto men, I don't want somebody using their peripheral vision, and I don't want to be tempted to use my peripheral vision. And of course in our church we've, you know, we have the box in the

back, and you don't even know if anybody ever got near the box or not.

It's there. If somebody wants to contribute, they can. They don't have to.

It doesn't get passed. There's not even a formal element of the service dedicated to it, because you have to, first of all, make the decision about if I want to give unto the Lord, as unto the Lord, I get to choose what I think that means. It may be this church, or it may be another.

It may be this ministry, or it may be another. It may be this opportunity to undertake and help out financially with something over here, or over there, or somewhere else. That's the first choice.

It seems to me to be a little bit presumptuous for me to say, well, you know, when you give to Grace and Truth Bible Church, you're really giving to God. That's your call. It may or may not be, and it may vary from case to case.

When you make that decision, and you do it before the Lord as unto the Lord, and you tell the Lord, I am contributing to this particular church because I believe that it reflects your word, the teaching of your word. I receive benefit from it, and this is a way that I can be a part of it and reciprocate. That's great, and that's probably more than I've ever said about giving in this church ever, because it's not hard to figure out that resources that God entrusts to our care become a part of stewardship, and we have to be good stewards, and everything we do is before the Lord.

So who we give to, when we give, how much we give ought not to be anybody else's business, and Jesus says the last thing you want to do is call attention to it and toot some horn. So this is the do not section. Do not call attention as these people do who are seeking glory from men, and Jesus says however much joy they got from that particular day and that particular hour, that's all they're going to get out of that.

The work died in the doing, and then the but section comes in verse three, but when you do a charitable deed, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, and once again, I call your attention to the fact that hands are used here metaphorically, just as they were in chapter five. If your hand offends you, cut it off. Don't let your hand know what your other hand is doing.

Hands don't have consciousness, do they? This is a metaphor. Hands are being used here as they were in the last chapter to in a hyperbolic fashion. Hyperbole is a form of exaggeration, but this should be so private that even within your own body, one hand is giving a gift and the other hand sort of doesn't know it.

It's a figure of speech for privacy. Privacy. It's a private thing.

You're doing it as under the Lord. Only the Lord needs to know that you did it, how you

did it. It's between you and him, and interestingly, think about this now.

Alms for the blind, charitable deeds, there is usually an object involved, right? I want to help a cause. I want to help orphans. I want to help people who are afflicted with a specific malady.

I want to contribute to cancer research. I want to help children diagnosed with cancer. I want to help veterans.

I want to help wounded warriors. I want to help whoever it may be. There is a particular cause.

It can be a personal cause. Here's somebody in my periphery that is pressed by circumstances. I want to do the bear one another's burden thing.

I want to put a shoulder under their load. I want to try to ease their suffering or the weight that they're carrying in some way. I have the means motive opportunity.

I prayed about this. I think that this is something God would have me do. He's put me here and made me aware and I can help.

Sometimes you can help with a thing and sometimes you can't. Sometimes you have ability and sometimes you don't. Sometimes it is within the scope of your priorities.

Other times you would love to help, but it's not possible. You are already committed to other, more central things. You sometimes can't always help somebody charitably because you're hard-pressed yourself.

To help them would be to start to owe somebody things that you've already committed. The Bible says, Owe no man anything. If you've scheduled payments on a thing, don't miss your payments.

If you have committed to a thing, don't miss that commitment. If you've said you'd be there or you do something, whatever it may be, you cannot compromise that in the interest of charity. God guides us in this way.

We may become aware of a thing, but our contribution is going to be to pray. Our contribution is going to be to offer a word of encouragement or speak the truth in love or something else. It may not be possible for us to provide material support.

It may not be appropriate for us to provide material support. Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't. That's between us and the Lord.

Whatever we do, we have to do it heartily as unto the Lord, not unto men. Jesus is emphasizing that, just as Paul will emphasize it later. So whenever you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

Notice that in this coverage of charity, Jesus doesn't even address the target. Be sure the person you're helping knows that you've done it. If your left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing, guess what the beneficiary knows? Probably nothing.

I mean, there's times when you can't avoid that, but if you're not impressing people, it's a tricky thing if you're going to help someone or someone helps you, that there doesn't enter in an element of subjectivity where you begin to, you know, there are elements of reciprocation and, well, you know, I don't want this to seem like it's all one way, and you start worrying about what they think and what you think of them and what they think of you, and it's a minefield. Jesus said, take heed, beware. In this charitable deed doing, it's a minefield.

It all has to be directed to the Father. It has to be before the Father. It has to be for his approval and within the scope of his plan and within the realm of his provision and under his guidance and direction.

And we have the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have the full-orbed coverage of such things in God's Word, but these things should be done carefully and with thought and always in the presence of the Father. If you get too caught up with the target, if you get too caught up with people in the periphery, Jesus says, you've got to take heed.

And if your left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing, chances are, if you can pull it off, the beneficiary shouldn't know either. To the extent that you can keep this thing as private, Jesus says, err on the side of unknownness, because you can put someone else in the way of temptation. They're going to feel overly obligated to reciprocate in some way.

You just create an element of subjectivity. And these things are all supposed to be in the realm of God's plan. When you do a charitable deed, do not let.

So he says, but your charitable deed should be in secret so your Father who sees in secret will himself reward you. Now, this doesn't mean that it's a bad thing for anybody to know that charitable things have been done or that it gets out or someone finds out inevitably, you know, that these things can become known. It's not necessarily a bad thing.

What is the key element here? What reward are you interested in? They have their reward, verse two. Your Father will reward, verse four. When you look at this act of charity, you want the merit to be in the eyes of the Father.

And that's your goal. Sometimes you can't help, especially if you get together and do a thing, do a project together as a group and you let's all go over. I remember I was visiting my cousin over in Ponca City one summer and his church youth group took on various projects.

And the week that I was there, we went over and there was a lady who was a widow and her husband had kept up the property. But since he was gone, tree limbs had fallen down and there was just a lot of cleanup and restoration and weeding and trimming and property maintenance. And so the youth group and I went with my cousin and we spent the better part of the day over there just giving that gift to that lady who was in the church.

And of course, she knew it, everybody in the group knew it, but it was done, I think, with the idea that we are the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are doing this because we're grateful to the Father for things that were done for us that we didn't earn or deserve, our salvation, our forgiveness. And as we have been forgiven and have been aided and have been comforted and encouraged and provided for by the Lord, here's something we can easily do.

We can make a donation of time and effort that helps a fellow believer. And there's no, well, look at me, I picked up the biggest branch. You see, what I'm trying to get at here is the element of reward.

If you go and help somebody clean up a property, you're not looking for her to come out and tip you or you're not looking at each other and, well, aren't we the bees knees in terms of spiritual attainment? It's just a sacrificial beneficial act and there's no element of reward or recompense involved. And that's what Jesus is talking about. In order to achieve that lack of reward, that's the degree to which it needs to be in secret.

You see the relationship between the more potential there is for it to be done for a wrong reason or for a reward to be involved, that's the level to which you need to keep it quiet. You can be open as long as there's no suggestion of glory from men or some sort of recompense. Let the reward element be from the Father.

That's the essential element here. So do not do it to be seen by men, but do it so that your Father in heaven can reward you. That's the first one.

And we're going to see now there's going to be do not do this, but do this in the next section in the model prayer. When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites in verse five, verse six, but you, when you pray, don't do it the way the hypocrites do, but do it this way. So that's going to be our second section.

The third section is going to start in verse 16. When you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, verse 17, but when you fast, do it this way. The next section is going to be in verse 19.

Do not lay up treasure on earth, verse 20, but lay up treasure in heaven. So you see this is the thread that binds these things together. They're like beads on a string.

And that's why we're stopping at verse 21. So let's pause here and take our break. We've

got the idea now of what the structure is and the mode in which Jesus is presenting these things.

And we've seen the key element, which is at the beginning, don't do what you do to be rewarded by men. You're looking for reward from your father in heaven. That's in verse one.

Reward is the key. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up in verse five.