

INNER LIFE

SERMON ON THE MOUNT: MATTHEW 6.1-15



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T . M . M O O R E

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Sermon on the Mount: Inner Life: Matthew 6.1-15
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Matthew 6.1-15: Introduction

The righteousness to which we are called in the Kingdom of God begins within. It is therefore, in the first instance, a matter between us and God, to be developed in prayer and seeking, in the secret places with the Lord.

If we're parading our spiritual lives before people, to impress or manipulate them, we're not practicing the exceeding righteousness to which Jesus calls us. We must seek that righteousness from the Father in prayer, following the prayer template Jesus has provided.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Between You and God

Pray Psalm 121.1, 2.

I will lift up my eyes to the hills—
From whence comes my help?
My help *comes* from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.

Sing joyously Psalm 121.1, 2.

(Duke Street: [Jesus Shall Reign](#))

I lift up my eyes up to the heights:
Whence comes my help by day, by night?
My help comes from the Lord above!
He made creation by His love!

Read and meditate on Matthew 6.1-4.

Prepare.

1. What did Jesus say our orientation should be in all our spiritual life?
2. What must we guard against in our spiritual life?

Meditate.

Jesus does not want His hearers to misunderstand about the true nature of righteousness. Righteousness, He has been saying, begins in the heart and is expressed in works of self-denying love, in which we are continually seeking to improve. He continues in this next section of the sermon on the mount to insist on the deeply personal and spiritual nature of true righteousness and Kingdom living.

First, as previously, Jesus points to the bad examples of spiritual life. Hypocrites make a show of their righteousness, giving and doing other good works for others to see and admire. If all we're seeking is the praise of men by our good works, that's all we'll ever realize (v. 5).

Jesus says that our focus in all our works of righteousness must be on the heavenly Father. We want to be seen by Him to be doing works of true Kingdom righteousness. Thus, we will prepare before Him, seeking His will in prayer concerning the work of each day (v. 10; cf. Ps. 90.16, 17). We will not advertise our good works. We will do our works from the heart, in self-denying love, keeping focused on the Father, Who is perfect, and Whose love we seek to emulate in all we do.

We are not ashamed to admit that we seek a reward for our good works. But the reward we seek is not to be thought well of by others. Rather, we seek to enter the life of our heavenly Father, Who does good to all, and to participate in Him and the good works He does, even for His enemies.

Jesus encourages us to be charitable and do good works, but not so that we might impress others; instead, He wants us to know the blessedness of true Kingdom living, which is to participate in the Father and His work of gracing the world. Knowing we are part of this great work is sufficient reward.

Reflect.

1. Explain the reward Jesus encourages us to seek for living in true righteousness.
2. Why is it wrong to seek praise from others for the good works we have done?
3. How can we keep focused on the Father and the work He is doing in the world as we go about our own work each day?

A hypocrite is one who pretends to be something one is not. This person pretends to be righteous yet shows no evidence of righteousness. All attention is focused on how one is being perceived or praised by others. Even pretenders may receive this praise precisely while they are deceiving those to whom they seem to be good. But they receive no reward from God the searcher of the heart—only reproach for their deceit. Augustine (354-430), Sermon on the Mount 2.2.5

Do good through me today, O Lord, but only for Your glory, especially as I...

Pray Psalm 121.3-8.

Give thanks to God for all His help, all day long!

Sing Psalm 121.3-8.

Psalm 121.3-8 (Duke Street: [*Jesus Shall Reign*](#))

God will not let our footsteps fall;
He will preserve us all in all.
He does not slumber, does not sleep;
God will His chosen people keep.

You are our Keeper and our Shade;
You have our debt of sin repaid!
You will preserve us by Your might.
Naught shall afflict us day or night.

Lord, You will guard our lives from ill;
You will our trembling souls keep still.
All our endeavors You will guard.
Eternal praise be Yours, O Lord!

2 When You Pray

Pray Psalm 63.1, 2.

O God, You are my God;
Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.
So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory.

Sing Psalm 63.1, 2.

(Nun Danken: [Now Thank We All Our God](#))

O God, You are my God, and earnestly I seek You!
My soul thirsts and my flesh in weariness now greets You!
Thus I would see Your face, with glory and pow'r arrayed,
in this Your holy place – Your beauty here displayed.

Read Matthew 6.1-8; meditate on verses 5-8

Prepare.

1. What does Jesus warn against concerning prayer?
2. What does He commend?

Meditate.

Jesus is preparing to give His first and most important lesson on the life of prayer (vv. 9-14), but He wants to make sure we have the right idea about prayer before He explains the elements our prayers should include.

So first, a preliminary lesson in how *not* to pray: When hypocrites show-off in prayer (v. 5), they are using God to make themselves look good. Their purpose is not really to pray, but to impress others with how tight they are with God, and how eloquently they can pray. The only satisfaction people can have, who use God for their own advantage, is that some of the people they hope to impress, will be duly impressed. Jesus says we must resist every temptation to want to impress others by our public prayers (v. 6).

Some people ramble on and on in their prayers, quoting Scripture, using trite phrases and titles for God, and saying the same thing over and over again, greatly impassioned (v. 7). Such people should not think their many words will necessarily avail them in prayer. God is not looking for *many* words, but *sincere* and *appropriate* ones.

Prayer is not a resource for getting God on our side, or for making us look good to others. For many people, the idea that *only* God should hear their prayers doesn't make much sense. What's the use of prayer if not to let others see how spiritual I am?

Prayer is, first of all, a secret matter (v. 6), a conversation between God and the one who prays. Its content is matters personal and profound, everyday and eternal, simple and yet sublime. When we

pray, we must try to isolate ourselves with God alone, so that we focus on Him, and not on ourselves or whoever may be around us. The proper focus of prayer is God our Father, Who already knows what we need before we ask (v. 8). Whenever we pray, we should be in a secret place with Him, even if we're at our work, in school, or talking with friends. By practicing daily retiring to a secret place with God, we'll be better able to do so whenever we turn to prayer. And in that setting, where we're concentrating on God alone, and caught up in the beauty of His holiness and the enormity of His love, we won't worry about impressing others. The words we use in prayer – whether spoken or silent – will be those appropriate to God and sincerely from our heart.

Reflect.

1. How do some people use God in prayer? How does God feel about this?
2. What does it mean to have a “secret” place to meet with God in prayer? Why is this important?
3. Is Jesus saying we should *never* pray publicly? Explain.

“For your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” But if he already knows what we need, why do we pray? Not to inform God or instruct him but to beseech him closely, to be made intimate with him, by continuance in supplication; to be humbled; to be reminded of our sins. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.4*

Lord, as I come before You in prayer today, I...

Pray 63.3-11.

Give praise to God for His many blessings, and seek His help for each specific task or opportunity before you today.

Sing Psalm 63.3-11.

Psalm 63.3-11 (Nun Danken: [*Now Thank We All Our God*](#))

Your steadfast love, O Lord, than life is better to me.
So I will praise Your Name, and bless You, Lord, most truly.
My soul is richly blest; to You my hands I raise,
and open now my mouth to offer joyful praise.

By night, Lord, fill my mind with pleasant meditation;
for You have been my help as 'neath Your wings I station.
My soul clings, Lord, to You; I rest in Your Right Hand.
May all who seek my life in Your displeasure stand.

Unto the sword's strong pow'r let our foes be delivered!
Pursue them to devour their mortal lives forever!
In God will we rejoice and glory in His grace;
but all who live by lies shall perish from His face.

3 Prayer: Praise and Submission

Pray Psalm 37.4-6.

Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the LORD,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring *it* to pass.
He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.

Sing Psalm 37.4-6.

(Neumark: [*If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*](#))

Delight yourself in God's salvation; He'll give you all your heart's desire.
Commit to Him your every station, and His good purpose will transpire.
Your righteousness a blazing light He will bring forth against the night.

Read Matthew 6.1-10; meditate on verses 9, 10.

Prepare.

1. What does Jesus mean by "In this manner"?
2. What should be first in all our prayers?

Meditate.

Why did Jesus consider it necessary to teach His disciples how to pray? Had they not grown up praying the psalms and other prayers of the Old Testament? Why this brief refresher course?

First, remember that Jesus is bringing us a "new" Law to teach us how to read the "old" Law. His teaching on prayer thus helps to organize the many different prayers we find throughout the Old Testament, and shows us how to use them within a proper framework for prayer.

Second, it was obvious – as Jesus noted in the preceding verses – that much corruption and abuse had come into the work of prayer. Jesus wants His followers to pray, and He wants them to be assured their prayers can be genuine, and can find favor with God. So, instead of learning to pray by imitating the hypocrites, they should follow His teaching.

Third, because we don't know how to pray as we should (Rom. 8.26), we need all the help we can get, beginning with Jesus' instruction about how we should pray.

Here Jesus says we should pray "In this manner". That is, He is offering a template for prayer, a guide to show us what our prayers – whether individual or corporate – should include. In Luke 11.2, Jesus teaches us actually to pray these words. So it's good to pray this "Lord's Prayer" verbatim, and to let it serve as an outline or framework for all our prayers.

Prayer begins with praise and adoration for God: "Hallowed be Your name" (v. 9). He is our Father, and He knows that it is good for us, His children, to rehearse His many excellencies. We praise God for Who He is and all that He does and has done. Praising God helps us to focus our prayers on Him, so that we draw closer to Him and depend on Him for all our needs. He already knows them,

so if we concentrate on praise, thanks, and adoration, He'll take care of our needs, even if we forget to mention them.

And prayer continues by our submitting our wills to God. It's not what *we* want that matters so much, but what *God* wants. His Kingdom and His will define the life parameters of all who follow Jesus. We embrace that call to total submission, and it guides every other aspect of our prayers as in each case we say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours, be done."

Focusing on God, seeking the progress of His Kingdom and the embodying of His will – this is how the Kingdom of God comes into being on earth, reflecting the way it exists in heaven.

Reflect.

1. What are some differences between *praising* God and *giving Him thanks* in prayer?
2. What work of God do we acknowledge when we address Him as "Father"?
3. Why is it so important to continually submit ourselves and our wills to Christ and His Kingdom?

Our Lord so frequently spoke to us of God as Father. He even taught us to call none on earth father, but only the one we have in heaven. Therefore, when we pray to the Father, we are following this command. Blessed are they who recognize their Father! Tertullian (155-250), On Prayer 2.2-6

Heavenly Father, receive my praise now, as I say...

Pray Psalm 37.7-9, 34-40.

Submit yourself anew to the Lord, and all the activities of this day. Pray that you will seek His Kingdom and follow His will in all that is before you today.

Sing Psalm 37.7-9, 40.

Psalm 37.7-9, 34-40 (Neumark: [*If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*](#))

Rest in the Lord and wait on Jesus; fret not at those who practice sin.

Forsake all wrath till anger ceases; let anxious fears not enter in.

The wicked perish from the Lord, but they are blest who heed His Word!

Wait on the Lord, His way observing, and He will lift you up on high.

Those prone to wicked ways preserving, your eyes shall see cast down to die.

The blameless man shall stand upright, for God preserves him by His might!

Salvation comes from Christ our Savior; He is our strength in time of need.

On us does He bestow His favor, who all His holy judgments heed.

He is our help in troubled times; our refuge He, in Him we hide.

4 Prayer: Supplication and Intercession

Pray Psalm 40.11-13.

Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O LORD;
Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me.
For innumerable evils have surrounded me;
My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up;
They are more than the hairs of my head;
Therefore my heart fails me.
Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;
O LORD, make haste to help me!

Sing Psalm 40.11-13.

(Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

Keep Your mercy not from me; let Your love and truth prevail.
Evil and iniquity make my trembling heart to fail.
Lord, be pleased to rescue me! Let my shelter with You be.

Read Matthew 6.1-12; meditate on verses 11 and 12.

Prepare.

1. What does “our daily bread” represent?
2. What are our “debts”, and what must we seek concerning them?

Meditate.

Jesus’ template for prayer begins with a clear focus on God the Father, exalted in glory, reigning in light, with Jesus at His right hand to intercede for us. Begin your prayers by setting your mind on the things that are above, where Christ is seated in heavenly places (Col. 3.1-3). Let the beauty of the Lord, the majesty of His glory (Ps. 93), and the sense of His great power and love (Ps. 110) draw you to Him, like the elders and tribal heads of Israel were drawn to the glory of God on Mt. Sinai (Deut. 5.23).

In that setting, commit yourself to God’s Kingdom and will, for in so doing you embrace His glory, tap into His power, and prepare your soul for the rest of your prayer, and for the day ahead.

With Christ in focus and His will our aim, we’re now ready to begin asking for things. As we turn to supplication and intercession (v. 11), we must always remember the promise of Psalm 37.4: “Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” What will the desires of our heart be, when we are delighting in the Lord Jesus Christ? They will be for more of Him and His Kingdom and righteousness, of course! Thus our prayers for daily provision and for the forgiveness of our sins will be received in and answered toward the fuller realization of Christ’s Kingdom and glory in every aspect of our daily calling (1 Thess. 2.12).

All our “daily bread” – all our material provisions, first of all – is from the Lord. We must not be so foolish as to think that by the work of our own hands we provide for our needs. God expects us to work, so that we will be able to care for ourselves and those entrusted to us. But He is the ultimate Giver of every good and perfect gift (Jms. 1.17); thus we seek for each day the provision we need to serve the Lord and further His Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven.

But we must also remember that Jesus is the Bread of life (Jn. 5.35), and we need Him as our daily Bread every day, all day long. Our daily bread includes all the spiritual fortifying we will need for the work ahead of us each day.

Linger over the need to confess your sins in prayer (v. 12). Our sins are often hidden from our immediate sight. We must wait in silence for the Spirit to search us, convict us where needed, and lead us into repentance (Ps. 139.23, 24; Jn. 16.8-11). Don't rush past this part of your prayer by mouthing some trite request for forgiveness. Name your sins. Hate them, and repent of them. Seek the Lord for a new course of life, one that leads in the paths of righteousness, for His Name's sake (Ps. 23.3).

Keep focused on Christ as you pray, and in each successive stage of your prayers, you will sense yourself being drawn closer to Him.

Reflect.

1. How can you make sure to keep your focus on Christ and His Kingdom as you pray?
2. Why do we need to request our daily bread every day?
3. Why is confession of sin an ongoing necessity?

"Daily bread" may be understood both spiritually and simply, because both meanings help us to understand salvation. For Christ is the bread of life; and this bread is not the bread of all, but it is our bread. And as we say "our Father," because he is the father of those who understand and believe, so too we say "our bread," because Christ is the bread of us who touch his body. Cyprian (fl. 248-258), Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer 18.

Feed me with Your Bread today, O Lord, and cleanse me of all my sins, so that as I go forth from here, I will...

Pray Psalm 40.1-10.

Praise the Lord for His many wonderful works, and commit yourself this day as a living sacrifice, delighting to know and do His will, and to proclaim His righteousness in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 40.1-10.

Psalm 40.1-10 (Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,
lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save.

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.
Countless wonders, Lord, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.
Lord, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e'er compare.

Off'rings You do not require – open now my ears, O Lord.
What from me do You desire? Firm delight to do Your Word.
Take my life in ev'ry part; write Your Law upon my heart.

Lord, Your truth will I proclaim to Your people gathered 'round,
nor will I my lips restrain – let Your precious ways resound!

Of Your saving grace and Word I would speak, most loving Lord.

5 Prayer: Seeking the Kingdom

Pray Psalm 26.1-3.

Vindicate me, O Lord,
For I have walked in my integrity.
I have also trusted in the Lord;
I shall not slip.
Examine me, O Lord, and prove me;
Try my mind and my heart.
For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,
And I have walked in Your truth.

Sing Psalm 26.1-3.

(Aberystwyth: [Jesus, Lover of My Soul](#))

Vindicate me, Lord on high; I have walked within Your Word.
Never wav'ring, though I sigh, I have trusted You, O Lord!
Prove me, Lord, prove even me! Test my heart and try my mind.
Let Your steadfast mercy be in the path for me to find.

Read Matthew 6.1-13; meditate on verse 13.

Prepare.

1. What is temptation? From where does it come?
2. What is available to us for resisting temptation?

Meditate.

The Lord's Prayer continues its forward-looking aspect, anticipating the spiritual warfare in which we carry out our callings from the Lord.

Temptation is inevitable, but it is not sin. Jesus was tempted, but without sin, as we have seen. God does not lead us into temptation, but we are led into temptation by our own lusts (Jms. 1.13, 14). German theologian Helmut Thielicke defined temptation as finding ourselves at the point of wanting to be disloyal to God. The evil one brings temptation before us, and when we find ourselves there, we have a choice to make.

Either we will continue to seek the Kingdom and will of our Father, or we will yield to the power of the father of lies. Either we will fall through temptation into sin, or we will grow through temptation unto greater righteousness. Only the power of God can allow us to resist the allure of temptation, and we must look *through* temptation to obedience, in the power and Kingdom of our Father.

God allows us to come into temptation, but He does not lead us *into* it in such a way that we become ensnared and lose our spiritual footing. When temptation comes, we must recognize it's the devil, capitalizing on our errant desires, goading us on *into* temptation and sin; and we must resist him, so that he will flee from us (Jms. 4.17). Thus we may continue on the path of seeking the Kingdom and power of God, so that He is glorified in all we do.

Reflect.

1. Paul said we can always find a "way of escape" when temptations arise (1 Cor. 10.13). What did he

mean by that?

2. God can use temptation for good in our lives. Explain.

3. How should we pray when we find ourselves in the midst of temptation? What can keep us from praying in the face of temptation?

“Lead us not into temptation,” that is, do not allow us to be led by the tempter. God forbid that our Lord should seem to be the tempter, as if he were not aware of one’s faith or were eager to upset it! That weakness and spitefulness belongs to the devil. Tertullian (155-250), On Prayer 8.1-3, 5-6

Strengthen me, Lord, to deal with temptation today, so that I...

Pray Psalm 26.4-12.

Seek the Lord for cleansing from sin, and for the strength to resist temptation and seek only His Kingdom throughout the day ahead.

Sing Psalm 26.4-12.

Psalm 26.4-12 (Aberystwyth: [*Jesus, Lover of My Soul*](#))

Men of falsehood will not sit in my presence, nor will I suffer any hypocrite to find favor in my eye.

All the wicked I abhor; ‘round Your altar let me stand, loudly singing evermore of Your gracious, mighty hand.

Lord, I love Your dwelling-place, there where all Your glory shines,
Keep my soul before Your face, lest for sinful ways it pine.
As for me, in righteousness, I shall walk on level ground;
save me, Lord, renew and bless! Let me with Your Church be found!

6 Forgiveness

Pray Psalm 19.12-14.

Who can understand *his* errors?
Cleanse me from secret *faults*.
Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*;
Let them not have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Sing Psalm 19.12-14.

(St. Christopher: [Beneath the Cross of Jesus](#))
Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!
Let evil rule not in my soul that I may blameless be.
O let my thoughts, let all my words, before Your glorious sight
be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right!

Read Matthew 6.1-15; meditate on verses 14, 15.

Prepare.

1. What conditions for being forgiven does Jesus put forth?
2. What can we expect if we will not forgive others?

Meditate.

Forgiveness is a very important matter, and in these verses, Jesus does not exhaust all He will have to say about it. If I had to summarize these two verses, it would be to remind us that we are called to be like our heavenly Father, Who is holy, perfect, and – as we see here – forgiving. We demonstrate that He is our father as we forgive others the sins they commit against us.

Jesus has just instructed us to seek forgiveness for our sins from God (v. 12). Forgiveness is a two-way street, though. It's something we receive, but it's also something we must give. In these "follow-up" verses to His teaching on prayer, Jesus emphasizes that a disposition to forgive must be present in us, so that we forgive those who sin against us as the Father forgives us.

But what is forgiveness? Forgiveness is a transaction between spiritual beings, where offences are admitted, mercy is sought, grace is extended, and love and relationships are restored. When we come to the realization of having sinned against God, we confess our sin – agreeing with His Spirit that we have transgressed – and seek the mercy of forgiveness. What we're asking for is that God will *not hold our sin against us*; that He will *accept our confession and regret*; and that He will *put our sin away from us, and remember it no more*, so that our *love relationship with Him can be renewed and continue*. Only Jesus makes this transaction possible, because He has paid the debt our sins incurred, and He is the righteousness we need for God to receive and accept us.

When others transgress against us, and come seeking forgiveness, our duty is to do the same as God does with us, and to look to Jesus for the strength to do so. Sins forgiven must be sins forgotten –

sins no longer remembered, nor held against those who have offended. This is how God the Father forgives us, and it must be how we forgive others as well.

Reflect.

1. Why is it important that we regularly confess our sins to God?
2. What does it mean to maintain a disposition to forgive the sins of others?
3. How can you know when you have truly forgiven someone who has transgressed against you?

Nothing makes us so like God as our readiness to forgive the wicked and wrongdoer. For it is God who has made "the sun to shine on the evil and on the good." John Chrysostom (344-407), The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.7

Forgive my sins, O Lord, and grant me mercy and grace to help as I...

Pray Psalm 19.1-11.

Thank God for His daily reminders of grace and mercy, and for His Law, which shows us the way of holiness, righteousness, goodness, and love.

Sing Psalm 19.1-11.

Psalm 19.1-11 (St. Christopher: [*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*](#))

The heavens declare God's glory, the skies His work proclaim!
From day to day and night by night they shout His glorious Name!
No speech, no words, no voice is heard, yet all across the earth
the lines of His all-present Word make known His holy worth.

Behold, the sun arises, a bridegroom strong and bright,
rejoicing as he runs his course from morning unto night.
From east to west across the skies his circuit he completes,
And none can hide their sinful eyes or shelter from his heat.

The Law of God is perfect, His testimony sure;
the simple man God's wisdom learns, the soul receives its cure.
God's Word is right, and His command is pure, and truth imparts;
He makes our eyes to understand; with joy He fills our hearts.

The fear of God is cleansing, forever shall it last.
His judgments all are true and just, by righteousness held fast.
O seek them more than gold most fine, than honey find them sweet;
be warned by every word and line; be blessed with joy complete.

7 Inner Life with God

Pray Psalm 15.1, 2.

Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart...

Sing Psalm 15.1, 2.

(Arlington: [*This Is the Day the Lord Has Made*](#))

Lord, who may dwell within Your tent, or on Your holy hill?
All those who keep Your covenant and walk within Your will.

All they who with integrity work peace and righteousness,
forever in God's house shall be forgiven, kept, and blessed.

Read and meditate on Matthew 6.1-15.

Prepare.

1. How important is prayer to life in the Kingdom of God?
2. How did Jesus regard public shows of one's "righteousness"?

Meditate.

The righteous lifestyle, which is the Kingdom way of life, is nurtured from the inside-out. We must always keep in mind that righteousness comes from God and is for God and His glory. Those who parade their righteousness, making a show of their generosity or spirituality, rob God of His glory, and themselves of the joy of serving in God's Name; thus they defeat the real purpose of righteousness.

We cultivate the righteous life in communion with God, both in our good works, done for His glory, and in our times of prayer. As we praise God and devote ourselves to Him and His Kingdom, He will provide for and sustain us in the life of righteousness. He empowers us to forgive those who have transgressed against us and to channel His grace to others, for this glorifies Him.

All superficiality of religion is excluded from the life of righteousness. By focusing on developing righteousness from within, in the presence of God and for the glory of God, we will become more like our Lord Jesus Christ and our heavenly Father. We cannot make ourselves righteous, and we must not try to persuade others of how righteous we are. Look to the Father through Jesus His Son. By nurturing a life of prayer, the mercy and grace of righteousness will grow in us and flow out through us in every aspect of our lives, to the glory of God the Father (1 Cor. 10.31).

Reflect.

1. Why is it so important that we not try to show-off our righteousness or spirituality?
2. What does it mean to meet with God "in secret"?
3. How does forgiveness demonstrate the righteousness of God?

This is a fitting conclusion to good counsel, not merely calling us to pray but also showing us how, not merely calling us to give alms but also showing the right spirit for doing so. The instruction is to cleanse the heart. Nothing cleanses the heart but the undivided and single-minded striving after eternal life from the pure love of wisdom alone. Augustine (354-430), Sermon on the Mount 2.3.11

Shape me from within for true righteousness, O God, so that I may...

Pray Psalm 15.1-5.

Seek the Lord for the day ahead. How will you grow in righteousness? Whom will you serve? How will your communion with the Lord improve?

Sing Psalm 15.1-5.

Psalm 15.1-5 (Arlington: [This Is the Day the Lord Has Made](#))

Lord, who may dwell within Your tent, or on Your holy hill?
All those who keep Your covenant and walk within Your will.

All they who with integrity work peace and righteousness,
Forever in God's house shall be forgiven, kept, and blessed.

Let truth from every heart proceed, and slander disappear:
Thus shall we know God's grace indeed and feel His presence near.

No evil to your neighbor speak, nor turn against your friend:
Thus shall you know the end you seek – God's presence without end.

Let every sinner be despised; but those who fear the Lord
Shall honor have before our eyes, according to God's Word.

All they who keep their word in faith, though suffering may ensue,
Shall know the favor of God's grace, His presence ever true.

No greed and no injustice shall they do who seek the Lord;
But on His mercy ever call and stand upon His Word.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why is it so important to guard against parading our “righteousness” before others?
2. How does prayer contribute to growing in righteousness?
3. Why do we say that the Lord’s Prayer is a template for our prayers? How can we use this template to spend more time in prayer throughout the day?
4. What is forgiveness, and how does God show us what forgiveness requires?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from Matthew 6.1-15? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.