

Lunch Time Bible Study
God With Us
A Study of Matthew: "Fasting and Wealth"
Matthew 6:16-21

March 20, 2018

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:17)

I. "Spirit-led" Fasting

- a. "And when you pray..." "And when you fast" Jesus in this teaching connects prayer to fasting emphasizing that in practice they should be taken seriously with humility before God.
- b. Jesus instructs on the familiar Jewish practice fasting, but in the "right way", with the expectation that his disciples will continue it. Pharisees customarily fasted twice a week.
 - 1. Jesus is interested in our witness. All of our outward expressions of holiness should be genuine.
- c. Prayer and Fasting are not to be *visible* or *intentional* forms of evangelism. We do them for God's eyes only and not for people's. (Read Isaiah 58:1-5-14) (Also see separate outline on *fasting*)
- d. It was a practice of the people of God to anoint their heads wash their faces for festivals, joyous occasions and personal hygiene. Jesus is saying, "Why not do it when you fast?"
- e. *Fasting* is not commanded in the Bible, but Jesus did not abolish it nor did He require a strict practice of fasting.
 - 1. We know that Jesus fasted for 40 days before He began His earthly ministry. (Matt 4:1-2)
 - 2. In Acts we are told of prayer and fasting on two occasions as an accompaniment to important decisions (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23), but not of any regular pattern of fasting.
- f. The sort of fasting that Jesus encouraged here is that of choice rather than of routine. Spirit-led.

II. The Two Treasures

- a. We see the connections between the devotions (*prayer/fasting acts of the righteous*) and *goals of the righteous. Quit collecting treasures yourselves here on earth, but collect treasures for yourselves in heaven.* Jesus prohibits giving primary intensity to earthly treasures.
- b. There is nothing wrong with saving money or providing for your children's children.
- c. Think about it you can't store earthly riches in heaven only those things that please God.
- d. We are to aim Godward rather than earthward. Every disciple should strive for the Father's esteem. Therefore, the context of this text is "being noticed" not necessarily money.
- e. One out of six verses in the Gospel deals with your relationship to money. We handle money more than any other commodity. Money gets us noticed. Money brings a certain amount of esteem.
- f. Favor from man here on earth comes and goes, but the Father's favor and attention are eternal.
- g. Even the desire to preach the gospel can be an earthly treasure if we desire praise from listeners.
- h. The goal of evangelism must be to the honor of God and not the maximum number of converts.
- i. If our goals are to acquire personal fame, a person's goals may become their gods.
- j. Ask what a person goals are and you will find a person's gods. Loving God with all of who we are provides balance to our actions.
 - 1. Every Christian should have a goal to win souls, not a certain number of people.
- k. A Christian should have the divine goal to give their best in service to Jesus.
- l. The Christian is to be ambitious, passionate, enterprising for God's approval and for the "well done My good and faithful servant."

III. Thoughts and Considerations for Action

- a. How, specifically, do disciples "collect treasures in heaven?" Live your life to fulfill God's will. (Matt 19:21)
- b. God will never forget your name and every child of God is popular in His eyes.