

The Sermon on the Mount
(Lesson 12)

Introduction:

1. In Matthew 6:1-18 Jesus dealt with 3 religious activities practiced by the Jews: doing alms, praying, and fasting.
2. Unfortunately, the leaders of the Jews practiced these activities in a hypocritical way.
3. In dealing with these matters, Jesus first warned His followers not to imitate the Jewish leaders, and He then revealed His will on these subjects.
4. This lesson is a study of Matthew 6:5-15 where Jesus dealt with "prayer."

Discussion:

- I. (vs.5-6) JESUS WARNED HIS FOLLOWERS NOT TO PRAY LIKE HYPOCRITES
 - A. (vs.5a) "*When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are.*"
 1. A hypocrite is a play actor, someone who pretends to be something he is not.
 2. Jesus was referring to the Jewish religious leaders and teachers.
 3. Jesus expects His followers to do better than them (Matthew 5:20).
 - B. (vs.5b) Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of these people.
 1. They loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets.
 2. Jesus was not talking about someone leading a public prayer in worship -- He was talking about praying personal prayers in public, as illustrated in Luke 18:10-12.
 3. The hypocrites prayed like this because they wanted to be seen of men.
 - a. (Matthew 23:14) Jesus said that they made long prayers for a pretense.
 - b. (Matthew 23:28) They wanted to impress others with how righteous they were.
 - C. (vs.5c) Jesus said that such hypocrites have their reward.
 1. Their reward was the recognition of men.
 2. (vs.1b) They would receive no recognition from God.
 - D. (vs.6) Rather than express personal prayers in public, Jesus said that we are to pray privately.
 1. Going into the closet and shutting the door puts us alone with God.
 2. With no one else around, the temptation to impress others will not be present.
 3. The Lord will reward this type of prayer.
- II. (vs.7-8) JESUS WARNED HIS FOLLOWERS NOT TO PRAY LIKE HEATHENS
 - A. When we pray, we are not to use "*vain repetitions.*"
 1. To illustrate, the prophets of Baal repeated, "*O Baal, hear us*" (1 Kings 18:26).
 2. Heathens did this because they thought they would be heard for their much speaking.
 - B. The Lord does not want His followers to pray like this.
 1. We must avoid using vain repetitions because God knows what we need before we ask.
 - a. Some say that there is no need to pray because God knows our needs.
 - b. God knows our needs, but He still wants us to talk to Him (Matthew 7:7-8).
 2. (Ecclesiastes 5:2) When talking to God, "*let thy words be few.*"
- III. (vs.9-13) JESUS TAUGHT HIS FOLLOWERS HOW TO PRAY
 - A. The Lord's model prayer is reverent, brief, and thorough.
 - B. From the model prayer, we learn that:
 1. Prayer is addressed to the Father (vs.9).
 - a. The Father is in heaven -- we are to reverence His high and holy name.
 - b. Jesus did this as He began and as He ended His prayer.
 2. Jesus prayed for the kingdom to come (vs.10a).
 - a. At that time the kingdom was very near (Matthew 4:17), but it had not been established.
 - b. Since God's kingdom has now been established, it is not proper for us to pray for the kingdom to come, but we need to pray for its welfare and growth.
 3. (vs.10b) We are to pray for God's will to be done (1 John 5:14-15).
 4. (vs.11) We are to pray for our daily necessities.
 5. (vs.12) We are to pray for forgiveness (see vs.14-15).
 - C. One additional point is that we are to pray in the Lord's name (John 16:23b).