

# Fasting That Pleases God

2024.03.24 Morning Sermon in **Matthew 6:17–18**

<sup>17</sup>But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>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.

**Main idea:** Christians must habitually turn to God as their only Happiness and their only Help, by which He trains our hearts to see and know that this is so in all other happiness or help that He gives us.

**Introduction:** We've seen fasting that God hates and fasting that God chooses. How, then, do we do the fasting that God chooses?

1. Jesus assumes that you will fast.
  1. Weekly on the Lord's Day. This should be your joy. What a joy it must have been for those disciples who had kept Sabbath *with Him*, later to keep Sabbath *to Him* on the Lord's Day (cf. Mt 9:14–15)!
  2. Occasionally. NOT meaning infrequently, but when providence (especially in your spiritual life) gives you more than the usual occasion to find your happiness and help in Him. Bread fasting—something that you need to live (help), something by which God gives joy (happiness).
    1. When under great affliction (cf. Joel 2:12–13)
    2. When urgent in personal prayer (cf. Dan 9:3–5, ff; Ps 69:8–10)
    3. When the family has special reason to fast (cf. 1Sam 7:3–6)
    4. When the congregation has special reason to fast (cf. Ezr 8:21–23)
    5. When the nation has special reason to fast (cf. 2Chr 20:1–4)
2. How Jesus says to fast
  1. Be happy about it. Even though much fasting is on account of misery within ourselves or upon ourselves, fasting turns our attention away from ourselves.
  2. Look normal. Guard your heart from fasting for others' eyes by presenting a normal appearance to others' eyes.
  3. Enjoy Father in secret. Even when “out in the open” (which is why you have to look normal), your fasting will be unto Father in

the secret place of the heart, and Father will be your reward in that secret place of the heart.

**Conclusion:** Would you be scripturally “reformed”? Recover biblical fasting! Recover the Lord’s Day as a joyous fasting from all else but the Lord Himself. And recover occasional fasting as an expected/mandatory part of your walking with Him.

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))

Matthew 6 verses 16 through 18. These are God's words. 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.

Asurely, I say to you, they have their reward. But, 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? Your father, who sees in secret, Will reward you. Amen, that sends this reading of gods inspired and an errantwort Rejoice to know that he adds his Blessing to the preaching of it.

Please be seated.

Well in last week's portion in verse 16. We saw Christ's prohibition. Against fasting as a hypocrite fasting, is a two-faced person. First thing is someone who is not trying to have God as his reward, but someone who is fasting in order to get out of God. The other thing than God, that he wanted.

Uh, and we saw, especially by looking at the whole of Isaiah 58. That the Lord Jesus who says this? Verbally orderly to those disciples gathered to him, to hear him preach. Up on the mountain. In Matthew chapter 6, Is also the one who by his Spirit had commanded Isaiah to announce to his people.

His very religious people, his church-going people, his sermon hearing people, his fasting people How dreadfully, wicked and sinful? They were in their church going and sermon hearing and fasting. Because they were doing it as a burden, a misery to be endured in which they thought they might indebt God and indeed, they were upset and indignant.

When they had done all of these things and God did not give them what they wanted and he described their fasting as an attempt to strike heaven with a wicked fist. To try to bludgeon out of God by their religiosity. The things that they wanted instead. And not only there in Isaiah 58.

Then did we see the sort of fasting God hates? But we also saw what God called the fast that he has, chosen a fast of being liberated from those things that enslave us and that thing singular, which most enslaves us our own sinfulness and that the one who is enjoying fasting as Liberty to turn, attention from Earthly sustenance and Earthly pleasure, and Earthly labor, to God himself, as sustenance, and God himself, as pleasure, and the worship of God, as the great labor of any of his creatures.

That this was the fasting that God has chosen, and those who they are, thus liberated in delighting, in God, or liberated even from sin in a way that makes them imitators of God being delighted to Freedom also to those around them open-handed in generosity, merciful to those who are under them and God's chosen fast.

And so it is not surprising for us with that as the great Old Testament lesson. On fasting which Christ by his Spirit carried along the the prophet Isaiah. Not only to write and preach but especially to do. So in that section of Isaiah which we have now entered in our reading, through Isaiah in, which he is increasingly uh intensely prophesying.

Proclaiming the Christ who had come the servant who had come even as we heard this morning. That although Israel, the people descended from Jacob. He had begun the book of Isaiah charging, with not being what God had called them to be among the Nations and out from among the Nations and unto the Nations.

The Lord Jesus, the servant he would call Israel, which we just read and heard in Isaiah 49. And so it's quite plain that in Isaiah 58. Uh, Israel had not come to Delight in the Lord in this way. But one of the things that is being prophesied There and fulfilled here and I don't just mean here.

Meaning Matthew 6, Versus 16 through 18 in Palestine, 2000 years ago. But what is being fulfilled here in Middle Tennessee? In 2024 among God's people is that when the Christ comes He would give his people of his own heart. To delighten God as he has perfectly delighted in God on our behalf so that we never fast in such a way.

To vindicate ourselves before God no Christ. As all of our Vindication Christ, does all of our righteousness. But he, who is our righteousness before God also makes us to be righteous like himself. And so, the Lord Jesus here, preaching on the sort of fasting that we would understand in the Not too far away context of Matthew chapter 6.

And we mentioned it there. Back in chapter four that when he fasted 40 days and 40 nights it was increasingly depending upon and delighting in his heavenly father so that he was so well prepared. When the devil would come and say if you are the son of God, Stones to become bread, don't you know that?

That your father, if you're really, the son, should be taking better care of you, giving you more strength, giving you more gladness. How could you be denied bread for 40 days? But after 40 days of depending upon and delighting in his father in fasting, Our Savior, he answers perfectly doesn't he?

This written man shall not live by bread alone. But by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, don't you see have strength greater than bread. I have Fellowship greater than that that comes in Breaking Bread. I have pleasure and Delight greater than that becomes from enjoying bread.

And so now your savior Is perfectly righteous in your behalf. If you're a Christian, if you believe in him, he is your righteousness before God. And you have done away with all trying to obey well enough that you would be right with God. Christ is your righteousness and he comes and he preaches his word to you.

In Matthew chapter 6. Now Not just warning us. As I hope we were all well warned by our Lord, in verse 16 last week, about the sort of fasting that God hates, but encouraging us exhorting,

us commanding us, instructing us in verses 17 and 18 this morning in the sort of fasting that pleases.

God that God loves or as he said it. And we saw last week in Isaiah 58, the sort of fast that God chooses Receive his instruction, then organize our receiving his instruction from this scripture, under these two headings first that Jesus assumes. That you will fast Jesus assumes that you will fast.

And then in the second place, how Jesus says for you to fast How Jesus says, For you to fast now, Jesus assumes that you will fast he says, but you when you fast, he's talking now to his disciples. And he's actually talking to them about something that they will do in the future, if you Uh, if you turn Matthew 9.

Uh and verse 14, at that point, there are those who have not yet left, John the baptizer or as we anachronistically but theologically accurately call him, John, the Presbyterian. And says, then the Disciples of John came to him saying, why do we? And the Pharisees fast often. But your disciples do not fast.

They've noticed something they've noticed a difference in They thought the fasting at all between themselves and the Disciples of Jesus between themselves and their fasting and Christians as it were, although that word too is a little bit anachronistic, out of its place and time. In this verse they've noticed something between their fasting and Christians whom they thought did not fast at all.

And Jesus said to them, Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn? As long as the bridegroom is with them. But the days will come. When the bridegroom will be taken away from them. And then, They will fast. And so, the Lord Jesus. Had not LED his disciples in the whole time that he was with them on Earth and would not lead his disciples in the whole time that he was with them on Earth in fasting.

Because there is a significant distinction between Any sort of religious fasting and the right sort of religious fasting in its manner? That sort of miserable fasting in which we fast in a way in which we're, uh, focused on ourselves and what we cannot do, and what we do not have and then when it comes to the fasting aspect, we're focused on what we are denying ourselves.

And that manner of fasting is what God hated in Isaiah 58, and what the Lord Jesus is warning us about in verse 16. And there's a difference in manner, that yes, there is a mourning, a grieving over us bless ourselves. Blessed are those who mourn? But in fasting, we enjoy the second part of that beatitude for they shall be comforted.

So the Lord brings us into a condition of humiliation by difficult circumstances or by bringing us to an awareness of our sin and we're exposed as being much more sinful than we had previously understood. And in our repentance, we cry out to him with fasting, or he brings us to a great.

He brings us Low by a great sense of our neediness and we cry out in Urgent prayer having uh, coming Means by which he would protect us by which he would preserve us by which he would enable us. And we are pressed into this more urgent and more needy praying that often comes.

With fasting. And yes, there is that morning, but blessed are those who mourn and blessed, are those who fast for they shall be comforted. And in our fasting, we ought to be focused upon the bridegroom. To use the language of Matthew chapter nine. This is why they didn't fast.

Because they were are fasting is a longing for God, as our help a longing for and depending upon God, as our help, and our longing for and delighting in God as our happiness, but the disciples and the immediate presence of the Lord. Jesus Christ have God in his fullness even in bodily form.

As the scripture tells us about the Lord Jesus, that it pleased. God, that in him, that is in Christ, the fullness of the godhead dwelt bodily. So that there was nothing more of God. Not just to be seen like he says to Philip and John chapter 4 and Philip says, show us the father and Jesus's answer is, have I been you with you so long and you still do not know me?

And Seeing the father not, is there? Nothing more to be seen of God than there is to be seen in Jesus. There is nothing more to be dependent upon in God than there is to be dependent upon in the Lord. Jesus Christ. There is nothing more to be delighted in in God than there is to be delighted in, in the Lord.

Jesus Christ. This is one of the reasons why it's so important in your trinitarian doctrine that, you know, that it is one God. He is one God. And these three persons not similar in substance, but the same in substance that if you have one person of the God, you have the whole godhead.

And if you are missing one person, the godhead you are missing the whole godhead. And so if you have Christ, you have God. And so there's nothing to fast for so long as they have Jesus. In Matthew chapter 9 said, this is not mourning.

To fast in a way that turns away from self to God to depend upon him and to lighten him. This is they have the bridegroom with them. And so if they're grieved over themselves, which well, they should should have been and often were and found themselves, very needy. And why are you asleep?

Lord, wake up. We perish and and sometimes failed to be needy in themselves. I will never deny you and well you will deny me three times but you won't stumble and fall finally because I have prayed for you and I will restore you and would you are restored to your Brethren then you minister by my grace and my strength and so they have in Christ That they need.

And so when we fast, we must not fast with a sad countenance, verse 16, rather, we fast, as those who anoint our head, and wash our face, as those who are turning from ourselves in the lowliness in the humility, whether it's in our weakness, or our neediness, or our sinfulness, or the difficulty of the circumstance or the urgency of what we're crying out.

To God, for we turn from ourselves to him, Independence and joy, and our manner. Ought to be one. Our appearance ought to be one. That is consistent with the joy of depending upon and delighting in the Lord, but when you but you and you fast, anoint your head and wash your face.

Now. Praise God. There was something that they did weekly with Christ. That was analogous to this breadfasting. This food fasting that he's talking about here. And we heard it last week in Isaiah 58. Remember the Lord used his instruction for how to keep the Sabbath describing the Sabbath as a fasting from and a fasting too fasting from our own words, fasting from our own thoughts fasting, from even our own Pleasures, not so that we would be worldless and thoughtless and pleasureless but there's that fasting from.

So that there's a fasting too. So that we have the words of God and we think the thoughts of God, and we find pleasure in God, he says, you should learn from the fourth Commandment,

which is a particular commandment. What the sort of fasting when you come to offer, God religious fasting, right?

Religious fasting, as an act of worship. What you, how you should focus on, not what you are fasting from, but what you are fasting to Eat bread. But that I am. Living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God that I have fellowship with God that have strength from God, that have pleasure.

In God. And so there is this sort of fasting. Weekly on the Lord's Day. Where you call the Sabbath. A delight. Why? Because you're fasting from other Delights. You're fasting from other and this means especially Recreations those who have contrived arguments to say, well, we we cease from works but we don't cease from Recreations because it should be a day of Joy.

Well, Your work should also be joyous unto God. That's a misunderstanding of work and Recreation to begin with but it is a fasting from the joy of recreation for the joy of the Creator. And, And so this was something that Jesus had led them in. As they. As they kept Sabbath with him who is Lord week by week during their three years with him in his Earthly Ministry, but how amazing it would have been for them.

Uh not just in the 40 days between his resurrection and his Ascension, he would appear to them on the first day of the week as he's training them in this new first day Sabbath as it can even be Translated and the the first day of the week coming for them to be the Lord's Day and it would ring in their ears, Lord's Day by Lord's day from Pentecost afterward that the bridegroom has gone and it was better for them the ego because the spirit has come, but now they are those who as scripture describes long for his appearing.

And so it wasn't just one day a week. Of course that the, the Christian church would depend upon the Lord Jesus as their God and Delight in the Lord Jesus, as their God. But there was one day a week that was commanded by Christ. That was the Lord's day and the dependence upon him and Delight in him in that day in which you set aside other things in order to give the whole of the day to the public and private exercises of the worship of God, of the worship of the Lord.

And shape the rest of their week. And many of you have known the blessing, you've continued to know your own weakness, but you have known the blessing of starting to receive and keep the Lord's day to remember and keep. The Sabbath in that way as the Lord shapes the rest of your week, with dependence, upon the Lord, Jesus Christ, and Devotion to him and Delight.

In. And so Jesus assumes that your Sabbath keeping will be marvelously changed. By his revealing himself as God and as the bridegroom of the bride, and this wonderful then not date night, but date day morning and evening, it's not the Lord's morning, it's not the Lord's evening, it's the Lord's.

The that you will rejoice in him, especially as your God. But then there is also vocational fasting. And by this, we do not necessarily mean infrequent fasting. But fasting that is occasioned by something in God's Providence fasting, that is a response to something in God's Providence. That brings us to a place of Greater neediness and greater dependence.

A greater sense of our neediness and dependence and devotion, then the needfulness of Devotion to him and Delight in him. And what he is describing here again, is fasting. Particularly from food now in God's good Providence to us by taking so much time. Last Lord's day And understanding the parallel between fasting and the Sabbath in Isaiah 58.

We got to finish this week on the day that we come in the Book of Numbers to another sort of fasting in Numbers, Chapter 6 with the Nazarite vow and in that case, as we'll hear this, this afternoon that was a much more extended time than you could breakfast than you could food fast.

But here, the Lord Jesus is using the word fast in its ordinary sense. In terms of denying yourself, food is not. Of fasting from that, which is harmful and as fasting from that which is otherwise necessary and it's a fasting that has to be temporary or you will die.

Uh, bread fasting something that you need to live. And so finding God as our help and something by which God gives Uh, and so finding in that fasting chord as our happiness, and he has given us in his word. A number of occasions of fasting that help us understand.

What the purpose? Of this is And so these are and some of these are, we could actually make a much more detailed list and divide out different types of Affliction. Particularly when there's great danger or threat from From a military enemy or as in some Psalms from a legal or judicial enemy, someone who's bringing accusation and fasting for the Vindication of the name, we can divide these things out, the different sorts of things in which we would be urgent and personal prayer and so forth.

But these are These are the five. But here, that we've chosen, By way of a sample to highlight occasions upon, which we would rightly fast. With our Lord, Jesus not bodily with us right now, but in heaven, the first we've listed is when under great Affliction. Second, when urgent in personal prayer, When our family, when our household has a special reason to fast fourth when the congregation has special reason to fast and fifth When the nation.

Has special reason to fast. Well, Joel chapter 2 verses 12-13. When under great Affliction God had Afflicted his people in order. To bring them to repentance. I think maybe it's been a couple of years now since we had our brief series, Through the Book of Joel. But perhaps some of you remember the context, but in the midst of that he says now therefore says Yahweh Turn to me with all your heart.

With fasting with weeping and with mourning, so Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to Yahweh, your God for he is gracious and merciful slow to anger and of great kindness. And he relents from doing harm and so in their weeping and their mourning over what they were like that, God had Afflicted them to remind them of what they were like, God was reminding them of what he is like verse 13.

Of course having much in common with the way God declares his own name. When when Moses asks to see him on the mountain, And God hides him in the cleft of the Rock and the Lord gives Moses. His display of himself. Not so much in the passing of the glory, which was visual but when Yahweh proclaimed his own name.

Yahweh, Yahweh a God, merciful and proclaims so much of what he proclaims here in Joel 2 verse 13. But here fasting, when we are under great Affliction, And we are tempted to uh, to enter into mourning and for then, you know, we don't really do this in our culture.

So it's it's a little bit difficult when you tear your clothes, it is a big deal. You couldn't just go to, um, Common threads on Friday and pick up another set of clothing for for three dollars. Uh, no, you're you're tearing your clothes and mourning was A big deal to them.

He says Uh instead of tearing your clothes as if someone as if you are undone and hear something for which there is no remedy in putting ashes on your head and reminding yourself that you're dirt. And your there's nothing that you can do against death or there's nothing you

can do against this Providence, that has come, no, no comment, tear your heart before God instead of your claws, fast unto God deny yourself that which is in the creature.

Will turn your heart to that which is in the Creator. He who is gracious, he who is merciful, he who is slow to anger, he who is of great kindness. And many of you may come to a season in life, in which you are under great Affliction, it may even be when the Lord briefs you, he takes from you a child or a parent or spouse, someone near you.

And it may be God's help to you in that time. Where you remember? Oh, there are, there is in the Bible, occasional fasting. That is occasioned by something that God does in my life, where I have such Affliction in my circumstances, that he uses fasting to turn me from myself and from my circumstances and what is in me and what is in my situation to turn me from those things to, what is in him.

And so you, uh, you don't do like the Culture does my family comes from a culture in which a woman who is bereaved will often wear nothing but black for the rest of her life and she will try very hard. Never to smile again and she thinks she is honoring.

Her Earthly husband who has passed. Well, let her instead fast and anoint her head and wash her face and turn her heart to a dependence upon him whom she still has and a delight in him whom she still has. Not that all grieving and mourning is wrong. Uh, certainly that Perpetual for the rest of the Would be wrong.

But here fasting that turns to God in Affliction and finds him as Joy, in the midst of the Affliction fasting, when urgent in personal prayer, A couple of references for you here. These obviously, Are not exhaustive. Daniel chapter 9, and verse 3. Some of you remember that, we Uh, we actually had a sermon from this chapter on a day when we fasted together as a congregation and gathered to, uh, to hear the word and to pray and then broke fast together afterward, uh, well, Daniel recognizes That.

The days written. For the Exile of Israel are almost over and he comes now to pray and he's doing it by himself. And here, his personal prayer, the urgency of his personal prayer is supported by his fasting. Daniel 9, and verse 3. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make requests by prayer and supplications with fasting, sackcloth and Ashes.

And I prayed to Yahweh, my God and made confession and said, oh Lord, great and awesome. God who keeps his Covenant and mercy with those who love him. And with those who keep his Commandments again, it's taken. Isn't it from that? Exodus 34 Declaration, the Lord declaring his own name, Context there.

But then there is the comparison between what is in God and what is in Daniel and what is in the rest of his people for whom? Daniel is also praying. We have sinned and committed iniquity. We have done wickedly and repelled even by departing from your precepts and your judgments.

And so forth. But here as he comes to pray for an end to the Exile, not saying, oh well God already knows to end the Exile. He said it was going to be 70 years and it's just about 70 years. So, no. As we learned in. Not too many weeks ago, just a couple of weeks ago, we finished on prayer and the Lord's Prayer that when you know that the Lord will do something, you pray for it because prayer is an embracing of his will and a submitting to his will not a changing of his will what a wicked way to come to worship God by trying to change what he was going to do.

Daniel, when he comes to pray, he reinforces, he bolsters his prayer by fasting. Then also, Uh, Psalm 69 Uh this of course not just a prophecy of Christ but what it will be like Often to be a



Christian not only in our circumstances and what family may do to us for Christ's sake, but also in our character and what Christ will do in us in the circumstances.

So Psalm 69 and I'll start up in Verse 7, because for your sake, I have borne reproach. Shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers and an alien, to my mother's children. Because Zeal for your house, has eaten me up and the reproaches of those who approach you have fallen on me when I wept and chastened my soul with fasting and note that the words unchastened you could see there in the oblique text, the Italian sized text or Wept in my soul with fasting.

That I became. Uh, that became my reproach. And so when urgent in personal prayer, individual prayer here, he's isolated from even his family and there may be times where even in a Christian family. We are sinners. There may be times when you feel alone and And you have difficulty.

And of course, if you have family that aren't Believers, This will happen to you all the more but when you are alone in prayer unto God, One of the things that you may do to bolster that prayer when you are urgent in personal prayer, unto God, you may bolster that prayer by fasting.

Yes, prayer is in itself. An act of submission to God. A looking to God, as As God, who provides for all our needs. This is one of the reasons why when we were listening to the Lord, Jesus on prayer. We said we would never pray to a mere man.

We would never pray to a saint. We would never pray to Mary. They cannot hear you. Only God can hear the thoughts of our hearts. Only God can hear all things at all times, and they not only do they, can they not hear you? They don't know what to do, and only God has all wisdom in himself and even if they knew what to do, they wouldn't be able to do it.

Only God has all power. And so prayer is is of the essence of worship and must never be given to a creature. And so, yes, prayer in and of itself is an expression of neediness of God and dependence upon him, but there are times when that neediness and that dependence in the extraordinary circumstances of God's Providence to you, Felt more intensely.

And those are appropriate times in God's Providence to see him as calling you by the occasion of the urgency of your praying. To add fasting to prayer. As not just an expression before him of the greatness of your neediness and how intensely you feel it. But also and experiencing in yourself.

Because sometimes isn't it true of you, dear Christian. That, you know, in your head, the greatness of your neediness. And your desperation for God. But you don't feel it like you should and you're often forgetful of it, even in the midst of a difficulty. And you we are scatterbrained and easily distracted.

And so there is the blessing of God and how he affects us physically that hunger pangs. With that, in the midst of fasting, may be used of him. Not only for our expression to him, but our experience of him. We may also fast when the family. Uh, has need to fast.

One of the things we noted last week in recovery of biblical things. And here, we're hoping to recover biblical fasting, especially as it connects. To the Lord's day, which is not itself, bread fasting. But as a template for, all right, fasting, and a warning against all wrong fasting, no?

We noted last Lord's day. That one of the things that the Lord is giving us to recover in our Reformation, his recovery of the biblical family. To see our household as a unit before God. That that our house is not just a house, but it's a church in the house.

That's not talking about cell churches. It's talking about Christian Households. Um, like the household of Stefanis or the household of the Centurion or the household of Of Lydia and so forth. Well, Here in first Samuel 7, Samuel is speaking to Israel as a household. Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel saying, if you return to Yahweh with all your hearts, Then put away the foreign gods.

And the asteroids from among you and prepare your hearts for Yahweh and serve him only, and he will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines. So the children of Israel, put away, the Bales and the asterisks and served Yahweh only and in the language he uses there. He reminds us.

That Israel is not just a state. It is a Church state or a church house, state or a state house church. You don't have to do all the the permutations. But you understand the institutions of God and the societies that he has established, whether the house with its children or the church.

Uh, with With its members or the state with its citizens, Israel was all of those. It's one of the reasons why you have to be careful taking what God says to Israel and applying it directly to a state or directly to the church or directly to a family because it's all three at once.

And it's Unique in that situation, but when the family has special reason to fast A father, a husband is to lead his family spiritually. He has given duties under Christ. He is not their prophet in the way Christ. Is he does not invent new scripture, but he is to teach them everything that Christ teaches in the Bible.

So he is a prophet under Christ. He's not a priest in the way Christ, is he can't atone for his wife or for his children, but he is to lead his family before God in the worship of God. Is not a king in the way Christ says, but He does rule, he is the head and the wife submits to him and all of the children submit to them and, and so forth.

And so, it is proper for the head of a household. Not only to teach each individual in the family to respond to individual providence. That comes from God, for each of them. And so, a father or a husband May counsel, one of his children or his wife, he sees her in a particular anguish and he, of course, May fast with her or fast with them, but he might not call for a household fast.

And yet, there are occasions that befall the household together, the family together, in which, a husband or a father as the worship leader. The appointed worship leader of his family. Call for a fast in the house. This happens also. Among church. End here. In Ezra 8.

You have Ezra who, of course, is a priest. And he is. And he calls for and leads a fast. Ezra eight. Sorry. Verse 21. Then I proclaimed a fast there at the River of ahava that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him the right way for us, and our little ones and all our possessions For I was ashamed.

A request of the king, an escort of soldiers and Horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road because we had spoken to the king saying the hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him. Has power and his wrath are against all those who forsake Him.

So he says we've identified ourselves as a church. As those who belong to God by faith and who are blessed by God, as those who belong to him by faith. And so this man, whose office,

was that of priest and who had identified them? Uh identified the people this way says, so we fasted and entreated our God for this And he answered our prayer.

So sometimes a congregation has special reason. To fast and the el. May call for the congregation to fast and one of the occasions on which Our session has done this, our session of Elders has done. This is when the nation asked for fasting and prayer. This is something that I don't remember.

Now, having A call to fasting. Uh usually in the call to prayer, it's something like a national day of prayer or or Thanksgiving. And certainly, You'd have to have a A much more conscientiously Christian president than we have thus far had in recent days for to have one who called for fasting on Thanksgiving.

Um, It being a day of eating and gluttony. As we apparently think thought that way. Uh, but Nations also. May fast. Before God. And here, we have An example of it in second chronicles chapter 20, And in this case, Chapter 20, verses 1 through 4. And Jehoshaphat. Acting as a king.

Uh, it happened after this, that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon and others with them, besides the ammonites came to battle against Jehoshaphat and some came and told Jehoshaphat saying, a great multitude is coming against you from Beyond the Sea from Syria and they are in hazazan, Tamar, which is engetti and Jehoshaphat, feared and set himself to seek Yahweh and proclaimed, a fast throughout all Judah.

Judah gathered together to ask help from Yahweh. And from all the cities of Judah,

So, A little bit extra time. Reading through and mentioning these references. But just giving you a sampling from scripture on a number of occasions upon which we fast because King. Jesus is currently on the throne is in glory. He has not. Currently physically in our homes or leading our congregations or sitting on A, th In Washington or Jerusalem or anywhere else on the Earth.

We lack the bridegroom. And so we fast. Now how Jesus says to fast. Number one, be happy about it. Uh, back to verse 16 of Matthew 6. Do not be like the Hypocrites with a sad countenance. When you fast anoint your head and wash your face. Even though much fasting is on account of misery within ourselves or upon ourselves fasting turns our attention away.

Ourselves. Number two. Look normal. Guard your heart from fasting for others eyes. By presenting a normal appearance to others eyes. How you groom and how you dress matters. Not just for what you communicate or don't communicate to others, but for the effect that it has upon your own heart, If, as you fast, you are neglectful of grooming and you are and you dress.

But poorly and others, see this? That will tempt your heart to direct itself towards what. Others? See you doing, instead of what the Lord sees you doing? What the Lord sees? In your heart. And so, how How we dress. Matters. Look normal. Guard your heart from fasting for others eyes.

Uh, incidentally, this applies. This applies to the question. Of modesty, if you'll allow an aside about that, always dressing homely and ugly. Is a form of immodesty. It does not divert attention from you. It draws attention to you. And so there is modesty that is in covering and in And in that, which is appropriate to The the sex that God has made you, whether you are male or female, And there is also modesty in seeking to be tasteful and not different only for differences sake or in a way that tempts the heart to that.

But when you fast in the first place, be happy about it. And in the second place, look, normal, unless you're fasting with your family or with, Your church or with your nation. They shouldn't be able to tell. And, This is because you do not want to appear to men to be fasting first part of Verse 18, because you do want all of your appearance to, of fasting, to be directed to your father, who is in secret.

Now, this helps us doesn't it because, uh, we've and we've mentioned this already several times and and maybe it hasn't struck home for you yet, but when we did our Works of Mercy when he instructed us on doing works of Mercy, he said, do your Works of Mercy in secret and when he instructed us on Prairie, he actually taught us a a habit of private prayer, you know, going into your room and closing the door, what we call our prayer closet because it is closed.

Those words together but that's not the only place you pray. Is it, you pray with your family? You pray with your church. God helping us. We pray as a nation. Uh, And yet when we pray we pray primarily in the secret place of the heart. Well it is most clear here that in secret means in the heart not in the secret place otherwise you wouldn't have to change how you groomed.

Because of what other people would see because nobody would be seeing you, would they? So you can see, even in the logic here of verse 17 and 18, when he says to your father, who is in secret, he is talking, especially of the secret place of the heart. And that is why.

And this being one of the rare occasions. In which? Erasmus is sliced in time. Uh, Greek text, at the end of Verse 18, Actually. Disagrees with the majority of texts. The Greek text used in the church here at the age is why we didn't read the word openly. At the end of Verse 18, the scripture which the Lord has preserved in his church, throughout the ages, just says to, your father, who is in secret and your father who sees in secret will reward you, of course he'll reward you openly but he'll reward you everywhere because in fasting he is your reward.

And so you are enjoying him where only he can see, this is what you're fasting is for. To depend upon him instead of bread, usually you depend upon him by means of bread. When you bread, you're not replacing god with bread. You are enjoying bread as the means by which God sustains you when you enjoy, Brent.

And some of you make very enjoyable bread. It's so much better than those tasteless fluff things that come in the plastic bags in the store. When you enjoy bread, you're not to be enjoying uh, bread instead of God. The right enjoyment of bread is enjoying God and His provision by means of the bread.

But in fasting, he cuts out the the means to make it more immediate. Where you depend upon God and Delight in God, you find him more directly and immediately your help and your happiness. So that when you go back to not fasting, You bring what you enjoyed of him and how you depended upon him from the fasting time into the not fasting time.

And your ordinary life is shaped by, that means of his grace. To depend upon him in all. Those means by which he provides for you to delighten him in all the good things that he has designed to be delightful so that you don't do any of those things. Apart from him.

So enjoy your father in secret. You fast in secret in the secret place of the heart even when you're out in the open, uh, you look like somebody who's eating bread, you look. As sustained as somebody who's eating bread, you look as happy as someone is eating bread, but you and God know between you and God.

You're not eating bread right now. You're just you're being strengthened by God without bread for a little while. You're not eating bread right now. You are enjoying God without enjoying bread for a little while. And that secret if we can use the word doubly in a different way, here that secret between you and God.

Becomes part of the intimacy, part of the dependence, part of the Delight, it belongs to the essence of the sort of fasting that Christians should do. But for Christians, it's not just God, it's very specifically Christ, isn't it? The fact that you fast. Or that you ought to fast or that you now will begin.

Making fasting upon proper occasion, appropriate occasion, a part of your Christian life. Is a reminder that Jesus is God. And that if he was here with you, you would not fast. But your God is also a man. Who gave himself for you? And who is sitting on the throne of glory preaching to you by means of his word and spirit.

Interceding, for you, pleading the benefits of his once for all sacrifice on your behalf. And ruling and overruling all things for you. Because all authority in Heaven and Earth belongs to him. And, Now on Earth, there are only lesser magistrates because the chain of command goes to the throne where a man sits in resurrected glory.

So this is how Jesus says to fast. Be happy about it. Look normal and enjoy your father in secret by enjoying Christ. In secret. And so, let us be scripturally reformed. Let us recover. Biblical fasting, the sort of fasting that Jesus loves. Watching against the sort of fasting that Jesus hates.

Recovering the Lord's day as a joyous fasting analogy to fasting. From all else. But the Lord himself and recovering occasional fasting. As an expected and mandatory part. Of our walking with him as individuals and households churches. And Nations. Amen, let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we praise you. Who are Very God of very God. From all eternity. Are the? Who from alternity? Exist, live and fellowship with the father. And with the spirit. And who being God and the creator of all things? Became flesh for us. We pray that your spirit would make us.

To behold Your Glory by faith. We thank you that. Who did this for some of those who saw and heard him in his Earthly life? Also does this now for us, who cannot see you? And who only hear you in this mediated way, By your word and especially by the preachers whom you send.

But make us to know you and believe in you. Belong to you and trust in you as our God. Grant that we would depend upon you and be devoted to you and Delight in you. And we do pray Lord that you would help us to take up this biblical practice of fasting.

That you expect and imply that we will do as we follow you rightly. Grant that in the way that it connects to keeping the Lord's day and in the way that it connects to prayer, That your spirit would use these connections and the instruction from this passage. To help us fast, avoiding Those pitfalls that are come from our flesh.

That we might not fast in a way that you hate. But Grant to us instead to fast, according to the Commandments the instructions, the council you have given us here. That we would fast, not just in a way that you love. But in a way that loves you not just in a way that pleases you But in a way that finds our pleasure, In.

So help us, we pray Lord, Jesus by your spirit. Amen.