

The Walk with God

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Well, earlier I read Matthew 6, and the entire chapter will be our consideration here this morning, kind of as an overview introduction to the things that we'll be considering in the coming weeks. This is a glorious, glorious passage that gives so much direction to us as we seek to walk with God as believers in Christ. What Christ sets forth here has no interest to people who are not genuine Christians. What Christ sets forth here is contrary to the spirit of our age and I just want to set it with a couple of, kind of frame this with just a couple of very familiar examples for anyone who sees anything on social media. We've all seen the posts that people will make of pictures of their daily devotions with their Bible open next to their favorite cup of coffee and everything carefully staged to make a nice presentation to generate likes and comments on what they're reading for that day and making known what it is that they're supposedly doing for God. We've seen people either say or post things like, "I'm so excited to be today's vocalist at church today," or more in the realm in which I live and move and have my being, I am frankly quite tired of seeing my fellow brothers in ministry say things like this, "I'm humbled to be the breakout speaker at this year's G3 Conference. I'm humbled to have the evening session at Shepard's Conference," or whatever the case may be. You've all seen it. You all know what I'm talking about. Apparently, what I would love to say, but I don't want to generate conflict with people that I care about, but what I want to say and what my response to all of that stuff and a thousand things like it is this: apparently you're not humbled enough or you wouldn't be calling attention to yourself like that. And the Scriptures, what our Lord says here, makes that perspective inevitable to us and we're going to spend a few weeks going through this pivotal chapter, and this morning I just want to show it to you in an overview fashion. We really do need, even if we're the only ones who do it, we really do need to separate ourselves from that self-promoting, boastful spirit that is endemic in Christianity. We, you and I, we need to separate ourselves from that and align ourselves with our Lord Jesus and come under his sanctifying authority because in this passage, Jesus is specifically telling us what the righteousness of the walk with God, what that looks like.

Here in Matthew 6, he gives us an introduction to the walk with God, and it is remarkably contrary to the spirit of our age, and he shows us how you live out your faith in day-to-day living. This is what it looks like to be a disciple of Christ, and it is utterly contrary to that spirit that calls us to do great things for Jesus, great things as judged by men, great things that call attention to ourselves, and what a great disciple we are, and how we're

going to change the world, and on and on it goes. You enter into the spirit of Matthew 6, and all of that becomes profoundly distasteful, to be honest about it, and what we need to see is that the concern for righteousness brackets this chapter. And just to step back for a moment to say something that I nearly lost sight of. Jesus doesn't call us to look to be faithful in big things. That's not his focus as he instructs us at all. Jesus says, "He who is faithful in a very little thing will be faithful in much, and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing will be unrighteous in much." It is a wrong-headed perspective to dream about how we would be faithful when the opportunity comes if we are neglecting faithfulness in small duties on a day-to-day basis, because the glory of faithfulness is found in being faithful to the one who calls us to it. It is Christ who gives honor to these little things and obeying Christ is the greatest thing, the highest honor in all of the universe and if he calls us to small things day-by-day, then we embrace that, we rejoice in that, even if no one notices, even if no one congratulates us on it, even if no one praises us for our devotion. That's not why we're doing it in the first place, beloved, and so we must recognize the spirit of the age, declare it for what it is, an age that is in love with itself, imbued with the spirit of pride which comes from the devil himself, repudiate it, reject it, and say, "What I want to do is to give myself to the walk with God that Christ calls me to," and to gladly leave the world behind as we do. Faithful in a little thing, beloved, and the things of which Jesus speaks here at one level will seem like little things, but these are big things to Christ, and therefore they are big things to us to conform ourselves to what he has called us to be.

Now, I want you to see this concern for righteousness, how it brackets the entire chapter. In verse 1 of chapter 6, Matthew 6, verse 1, he says, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them," the practice of righteousness, the walk with God. And then you go to the end of the chapter, and after Jesus has gone through such matters as giving and prayer and fasting and priorities and responding to life with trust and not anxiety, after he's had a thorough discussion of all of those things in light of the overarching theme of righteousness, he circles back and says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." The righteousness which God prescribes, the righteousness which God requires, the context says that indicates that Jesus is telling us to focus and to seek first and to concern our priorities with these things that he discusses in Matthew 6 and then let the world, let the results come as they may, because the surpassing desire of the true disciple of Jesus Christ is to be faithful to him, whether anyone else notices or not, and this exposes our motives, it will no doubt be convicting to many, but let us embrace the convicting, cleansing work of the word of God on our hearts and souls, and trust God for the outcome.

So, again, I just want to bracket that. Jesus says, verse 1, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people." Verse 33, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." And what we're going to see here this morning, beloved, in this overview fashion, this is a fly-through, and we're going to come back to it all in detail later, but I want you to see the overall flow of the chapter here this morning and what you will find

is that the walk with God is surprisingly simple, and it is surprisingly practical. What Christ calls us to here are things that a young person can embrace and practice. This is something that does not require a large public platform to please God with. This is something that those in the declining years of their lives, as physical strength starts to ebb out of the body, these are things that can still be practiced productively and in a godly, honoring way from the heart, even if no one notices. The whole point is to live in a way that you're not seeking the notice and the praise of men and so it's surprisingly simple, it's surprisingly practical, and I want to break this chapter down in four sections for you here this morning.

This walk with God, that's the title of today's message, "The Walk with God," from Matthew 6, the entire chapter, is first of all, it is a walk of privacy, we could say. It is a walk of privacy. Now, beloved, let me make a simple statement here to clarify the nature of life for you as a Christian: Jesus Christ did not save you so that men would think well of you. Jesus Christ did not save you so that you would necessarily have abundance of friends and abundance of influence with men. No, Jesus Christ saved you so that you would be a possession for himself, Titus 2, verse 14. Jesus Christ saved you so that you would bear fruit for God, Romans 7, verse 4. Beloved, when Christ laid his hand upon you and drew you to himself, when Christ opened your eyes to see your sinfulness and the sufficiency of his person and his sacrifice in order to reconcile you to God, when Christ opened your heart and granted you repentance and faith to come to him and he drew you to himself, he did this in order to set you apart for himself, not to make you popular with men. He saved you to make you his slave, to make you one that he owns and directs and to belong exclusively to him, that your highest heart affections would belong to him and to him alone. And until that understanding of being sanctified, set apart for God in Christ, until that understanding of being a Christian is impressed upon you, contrary to the view that says God is your buddy and God's going to help you out of all your problems and God exists to serve you, until those things are clarified in your mind, you're going to have a very muddled walk with Christ and a very muddled understanding of your purpose in life.

Why that's important is that the four things that we're going to see here this morning are not things that are loved or congratulated by the world. You have to leave the world behind. As it were, you're looking at a platform here and there's a little space backstage, you have to leave the world backstage and come out onto the platform to live for God, I'm speaking metaphorically here, you come out on the platform where you are living in the presence of God, not backstage with the world and all of its polluted and perverted affections. You step apart from that, you leave it behind, and you come and you present yourself to God for the sake of obedience, for the sake of righteousness, for the sake of belonging to him and serving him, and the key to all of that is that the service starts here with what Jesus lays forth in Here in Matthew 6. This is the opening salvo of his teaching in the gospel of Matthew. When Jesus said, "Follow me, repent and believe in the gospel," these are the firstfruits of what the spiritual life looks like and we just have to, we just have to see this and embrace it, otherwise, we're really wasting our time. Otherwise, we're not walking with God at all if we don't start with these fundamentals.

It'd be like saying, I'm going to read a complex book on astrophysics, but have no interest in first learning the alphabet that introduces you to language at all.

And so four sections here to the walk with God and first of all, it is a walk of privacy. A walk of privacy. Christ did not save you so that men would think well of you. Christ did not save you so that you would seek the approval of men whatsoever and he makes this so plain in the first half of this chapter. Look at verse 1 with me, and I just want to show you the theme running through here. He repeats the theme multiple times as an indication of how central this is to be to our heart affections. Verse 1 again, he says, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them," in order to. He's exposing our motives. Don't do this with the motive of having men see you and applaud you.

Verse 2 he says, "when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that," here's the motive again, "that they may be praised by others." He condemns that practice of calling attention to your giving, which was present in the first century just as it is in ours, he condemns that motive that gives in order that others would recognize you and praise you for your generosity. Don't do these things so that men will think well of you.

He goes on and talks, addresses the matter of prayer in verse 5. He says, "when you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that," here's the motive, "that they may be seen by others." It's the exact same way that he expressed it in verse 2. Don't do it so that you'll be praised by others. Verse 5, don't do it so that you'll be seen by others. Don't try to put yourself forth into the center of attention of men with your spiritual devotion.

Just one other thing that I'm going to say, those of you that are on social media, those of you that aren't on social media, you know, consider yourself blessed and you don't have to see these things. There is a pattern that some professing Christians show and, you know, somebody will make a comment, "I'm having a hard time," and people will make a comment that is a prayer. "Father, please bless this dear person and help them and show them your mighty strength and your mighty comfort," and they just go on and go on in this fulsome expression of prayer that is made as a public comment to the post. That's not right. That is not good to use your prayer and display your prayer like that. Jesus says the exact opposite. If you're going to pray, go someplace secret where no one knows what you're doing.

And in verse 16, he says the same thing with fasting. He says, "when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that," here's the motive again, "that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward." Over the years, there have been prominent Christian leaders who made public their plan of fasting, and, you know, "I fast on Tuesdays and Fridays," or whatever the case may have been, whatever the days were; people talking about their fast and all the benefits of the fasting. Beloved, Scripture condemns every bit of that. Every bit of that. And it's hard to understand that because it looks so spiritual. "Oh, I'm not like that,

but they are. They must be ahead of me." Or if you're the one practicing it, "I'm ahead of you because look at what I do." And Jesus says three times, after a general broad statement, he says, "Don't do that. Don't do that. Don't do that to be seen by men." Your practice of devotion, the practice of your walk with God, the day-to-day mechanics of reading Scripture and prayer and if fasting has a place in that, it's to be done in private. It's to be done in the sight of God not in the sight of men. That which is to be sanctified in the sight of God is cheapened when it is used as a means of self-promotion to gain the applause of men. It's despicable.

These are things that ought not to be done and Jesus not only teaches the negative side of saying, don't do this, he tells us exactly what to do and as Christ saved you and sanctified you to belong to God and to serve God, here he shows that salvation is done so that you would know a secret intimacy with God, there would be a private realm in your life that belongs to you and to God alone. So we see in verse 4, well, actually, we can look at verse 3 for the sake of context. "When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." Don't even mull on it in your own mind. Do it and move on. Why? Verse 4, "so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Do it so that no one knows. Verse 6, as Jesus speaks about prayer, "when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." On the matter of fasting in verse 18, verse 17, he says, "when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others," so that they have no idea what you're doing, and do it so that it's seen "by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Rather than loving the applause of men, we seek the approval of God, and he has told us plainly that his approval on these spiritual practices is dispensed to us when we do it in a private way, out of the sight of men, without broadcasting it on Facebook, Instagram, or whatever other thing that people want to do. It's a walk of privacy if we're going to walk with God. It separates us out so that we're not under the, you know, we're not part of the parade of people, you know, we're not walking through a parade with people on the sides of the street applauding us as we go by. It's a walk of privacy.

So what Christ is calling us to, is to a mindset and a practice where we say, "I need to pursue these things in private before God and be cautious about the way that I present myself in public before men." So it's a walk of privacy if we want to walk with God. Don't do these things to be seen by men. Do them in secret. And when you pursue these things, however stumbling your efforts may be, however often it may seem that you are a complete failure in it, the Lord says he will reward you for that and that reward is far better than the applause of men. We'll study that more in days to come. It's a walk of privacy.

Secondly, it's a walk of prayer. A walk of prayer. A walk of true, earnest prayer. In Luke 11, we won't turn there, but in Luke 11, the disciples went to Jesus and famously said, "Lord, teach us to pray." They saw him pray, they heard him pray, and they realized that the Lord had something that they did not have and in something that I'll take as axiomatic, self-proving, self-evident, you and I, we do not naturally know how to pray.

We are too self-centered, we are too self-righteous, and we are too materialistic and so many of you have come from churches that conditioned you to pray exactly that way, that God is there to help you out of all of your problems. You go to God, and you just give him your problems, and he'll fix all your problems, and you can get on back to a natural, you know, enjoyable life and all of that, and the element of profound worship, profound devotion, ascribing glory to God in prayer, submitting to God in prayer, repenting of sin before God in prayer is something that is foreign to that. And they can't talk about prayer in those terms because that becomes offensive. That says that you're not worthy to be in the presence of God on your own. That makes the focus God-centered rather than you-centered. And so we need this teaching from our Lord on prayer, and we need to be delivered from our self-centered way of praying and of thinking, rather than feeding it and making God the butler who goes and gets what we want and delivers it in a timely way.

You know, and look, one of the things that I love about you, about our church, about the increasingly sweet, soft-hearted nature of the people that the Lord brings to us, is that I know that you understand many of you, the difficulties of life and the things that can't be solved and the issues that don't go away, the heartaches that stay and weigh on you again and again. And no matter how much you pray, you know, the Lord treats you like Paul, and Paul had to say, "I asked three times for deliverance, and the Lord said, my grace is sufficient for you." And you know something of what it's like not to get immediate answers to all of your prayers, to suffer over time, to see relationships grow cold that are special to you, things of that nature. Well, here, when Christ is teaching us about the walk of prayer, we see that it was never intended to be, the prayer was never intended to be the bulldozer that goes through and just makes the path level for us so that we never have any rocks in the path or any pitfalls along the way. This manner of praying teaches us not to be self-centered, not to be materialistic, not to be self-righteous.

It is a complete sanctification of the inner man that takes place in this manner of praying that the Lord prescribes for us and yet, at the same time, I love this, the Lord greatly simplifies prayer for us. He teaches us not to multiply words in the presence of God. It is the exact opposite of what I heard so many times as a young believer, you know, and just the implicit assumption that the longer you pray, the better you're praying and it just binds people's consciences to detailed prayer lists and different kinds of practices. "No, I didn't do that today, and oh," you know, and your conscience condemns you. Christ liberates us from all of that and says that what God calls you to is something completely different. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon says, "When you approach God, remember that he is in heaven and you are on earth, therefore let your words be few." And Jesus echoes that theme when he teaches on prayer. Look at verse 7. He says, "when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words." Verse 8, "Do not be like them." These Gentiles in their pagan religion, they blabber, they vocalize things, you repeat the same form of prayer over and over again, those of you from Catholic backgrounds know what that's like, and Jesus dismisses it all. He holds it up, says, "Here's what they do. Everybody knows it." And he goes to his disciples, and he points to us, and he says, "Don't you be like them." That is not how you pray in the walk with God and it's just so liberating to know that a

brief, earnest prayer like, "Lord, help," as Peter prayed as he was sinking in the waves, can be that which moves the nerve of Omnipotence on your behalf far more than going through a ritual prayer that someone else has prescribed for you.

Do not multiply words in true prayer and what he does is he teaches us, he teaches us true prayer in verses 9 through 13, and we'll spend three or four messages on this, so this is obviously just very brief here. But what Christ teaches us in prayer here in this section known as the Lord's Prayer, he teaches us to put ourselves aside and to put God at the center, put our holy, righteous, loving Father at the center of our attention, so that in verse 9 and 10, the heart of prayer, the priority of prayer is God himself, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." "God, as I enter into your presence through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, I remember who you are. You are my loving Father. You are my dear Father, and I can trust you as I pray to you." That's what the term "Father" communicates to us. He loves us as one of his own children and yet we say, "Hallowed be your name. Father, I don't presume on you. I remember your holiness. I remember your sovereignty. I remember your omnipotence, your omnipresence, your omniscience, and I honor and worship you as the Creator of heaven and earth, the Creator of my body and soul, the Judge of heaven and earth. I honor you. I worship you." And all of a sudden, you're in a completely different spiritual realm in this walk of prayer as you're honoring God and praying to him in that way that it almost seems trivial to bring up the anxieties, not that we don't pray and commit our cares to the Lord, but there is this holy reverence that defines the whole atmosphere in which we pray.

That's the walk of prayer and as we go on in verses 11 through 13, Christ teaches us dependence. He teaches us repentance as we pray. So in verse 11, he says, "Give us this day our daily bread." There are things we need on a daily basis. "Father, I ask you for them humbly. I depend upon you to provide for me." And this repentant, forgiving spirit in verse 12 and 13, "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The spiritual concern, the priority for righteousness, "God, cleanse me from my many sins. Forgive the ones that I remember and forgive the many that I don't. Wash me, cleanse me from all unrighteousness." And verse 13, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." All of these things, beloved, showing us an attitude, an atmosphere of worship. "Our Father who is in heaven. Hallowed be your name." An atmosphere of submission. "Your kingdom come, your will be done, not mine." An attitude of dependence. "Give us this day our daily bread." An attitude of repentance. "Forgive our debts as we have forgiven our debtors."

Beloved, that's the kind of righteousness that God calls you to. That is the practical walk with God on a day-to-day basis, remembering who he is, honoring and worshiping him as such, submitting to him, trusting him, repenting of our lowly, meager, inadequate obedience to him. Down the road, we'll see how fasting fits around all of that but for now, just focusing on that walk of prayer. And beloved, I trust and I'm utterly dependent upon the help of the Holy Spirit in what I'm about to say, I trust that you see that these things are holy, that these things are set apart, that they are to be treated with respect and with reverence and therefore, the true spirit of these things, the true spirit of worship and

dependence and repentance could never be something that was an appropriate thing to display for men to applaud us for doing. It could never be that way because these are things that are expressions of a humble spirit before the living God, a humble spirit before our heavenly Father, a humble spirit before our redeeming Christ, a humble spirit before the indwelling Holy Spirit. High, lofty themes for the human heart to engage. What a trashing, what a trivialization to turn what prayer is supposed to be into something that makes a nice little meme on Instagram. Those of us that have practiced such things should hang our heads in shame and go back and delete those posts as an act of repentance and proper contrition for having turned what God has given to us to walk with righteousness before him in secret, and that we have turned it into something of a display to be made before men.

This walk with God is private. This walk with God is of true prayer, and we'll see that more as we go along in the days to come. You know, I want to be appropriate and guarded, I guess, a little bit in what I'm about to say. You would be surprised, perhaps, some of you, those of you with gentle, tender spirits who think the best of everybody, as in one sense you should, but not everybody that comes through the doors of Truth Community Church wants that. And it's not surprising that when what they really want comes out, you see that there's not a long-term future for someone here. I remember in the past, guys saying, "I want to be taught what it means to be a man of God," and apparently not thinking that they weren't getting that here at Truth Community Church. And I, in a sense, I know what they mean by that, you know, how you lead your family, and you take dominion for the name of Jesus, you know, and they're talking about things like that, and that's what they mean when they say that. But Beloved, don't you see, don't you see that what Jesus is teaching us here in Matthew 6 is obviously intended, this is what it means to be a man of God. This is what it means to walk with God, to walk with him in a spirit of private devotion that doesn't call attention to how holy you are, to walk with him in a spirit of prayer that is filled with worship and dependence and repentance. That's what it means to be a man of God. The other stuff is secondary. What you do with your life in practical ways, that's secondary and in effect a fruit of these prior first principles that we are to devote ourselves to as the highest priority. We're seeing a view of what it means to walk with God that is distinct and separate and unlike what is publicly presented in many places.

Dear friends, dear friends, it is incumbent upon you, it is incumbent upon you to spend time in this chapter on your own and to read it for yourself and to see that the things that you are hearing today are true and are life-defining directions and priorities for you if you want to walk with God. You can't bypass this. To repeat my illustration, you can't bypass the alphabet in an effort to read books. You can't bypass syllables for the sake of forming words. They're fundamental. Everything builds on that. You can't bypass addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division for the sake of going straight to calculus. You enter into calculus through those fundamental elementary things. These are the elements, these are the fundamental things without which there is no true walk with God and, you know, as well as I can know my own heart in the presence of God, I just want you to walk with God. That's all. I just want you to walk with God. I want to show you that

Christ says this is the way to do it. This does not constrain us, this liberates us for the truth.

So we've seen a walk of privacy. Don't do these things to be seen by men. Do them in secret and your Father will reward you. A walk of prayer. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done. I submit, Lord. I love you, Lord. I worship you, Lord," which is so different than saying, "Lord, fix this problem now." Thirdly, we see that Jesus teaches us a walk of priorities. A walk of priorities and I want to go back to a couple of verses that precede the Sermon on the Mount in the gospel of Matthew, if you'd look at Matthew 4. Matthew 4, in verse 17, Jesus began to preach in verse 17, and this summary statement describes the whole intent of his earthly ministry and teaching. He says, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom of heaven was at hand because Jesus the King was present, you know, and so if Jesus was physically in the room, you could say the kingdom of heaven is at hand because the King is here. And because the King was here, he says, "Repent, turn from sin, turn from your self-centered life," and as we see in verse 19, "he said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.'" Repent and follow me. That is the essence of what it means to be a Christian. It is the essence of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. You have turned decisively away from your prior manner of living, your selfish heart, your sinful rebellion against God, the principle of sin, you've rejected, you come to him with an unconditional willingness to follow him wherever he leads you, and you take up your cross, you go after him, and you follow him. The person of Christ is at the center of the gospel, not simply changing your outward behavior, you leave yourself behind and you take up Christ to follow him. It is the lovely person of our Lord Jesus. It is our sweet Redeemer who we take up and follow, not a new set of rules, not outward morality for the congratulation of men. We take up the person of Christ, we embrace him, we submit all of our affections and love and our will, our thought, our mind, our thoughts, our obedience, we take all of that together and we lay it at his feet and we say, "I now belong to you and I will follow you all my days. Just save me, just have me." Not in the spirit of, "Lord, come into my heart," as if you're the one in control, we go to him and say, "Lord, take me into your heart. Save and redeem me. I come to you without qualifications. I come to you in repentance. I come to follow you." And the outworking of that utterly redefines your life priorities.

It's a walk of priorities and what Jesus says in Matthew 6 is that you cannot follow him in a half-hearted way. If you want a half-hearted walk with Jesus, you're saying, "I won't have Jesus." You don't have him at all if you're trying to share him with other things and other priorities in your life. You cannot follow him in a divided manner. You cannot be a divided man and follow Christ because he demands your all. In Matthew 22, he said, "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your soul, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." There is a comprehensive, complete call upon the totality of the inner man to come and follow Christ and Jesus makes that plain when he speaks in verses 19 through 24 of Matthew 6. Look at it there with me. He says, "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," verse 21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." You set your affections on

Christ. You set your affection on the life to come. Here we have no lasting city, but we are seeking the city to come it says in Hebrews chapter 13.

And so there is a subordination of the things of this world to the greater priority, the greater love of Christ and his kingdom that is the mark of a true walk with God, and understand, beloved, understand that this is a comprehensive call that calls for a black and white decision of your will to follow him. You cannot consciously, consciously say, "I will not let go of this sin. I will not let go of this sinful relationship. I will not let go of this way of thinking." No, you cannot have, you can't carry that baggage into the kingdom of God with you. It doesn't pass through security. And Jesus makes that plain when he says in verse 24, look at it there as he lays out the demands and the cost of true discipleship. He says, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Beloved, I ask you whether Christ has your all or not. How could I not ask a fundamental question of you like that in light of what Christ says? If you're trying to hold on to the world and still follow Christ, there's a reason why your life is divided and complicated and confusing to you. Jesus says, "You have to follow me exclusively as your sole priority, or you can't have me at all." That's the cost of following the King. No earthly king would allow a subject to have loyalty to a different king. It's completely contrary to the idea of a royal reign. Christ says you've got to make your choice and then live it out. You can't serve God and serve the things of this world simultaneously. Which will it be? Are you a disciple of Christ or are you a double-minded man at best? James says, don't let that double-minded man think he'll receive anything from God.

And so Christ has shown us it's a walk of privacy. It's a walk of prayer, of worship, humility, dependence, repentance. It's a walk of priority. "Lord, I have repented. I have taken up my cross. I will follow you. I do follow you. And forgive me and cleanse me and redirect me and correct me whenever I stray from that path." Fourthly and finally, this walk with God is a walk with providence. A walk with providence, and in light of everything that Christ has said about the privacy, the priorities, the prayer, you and I, we still have to walk and live on this earth, don't we? We don't do what they've done in the past, you know, people would go out and try to live in monasteries and think that that was the way that they could best serve God. Scripture says, Paul said, "You know, I don't tell you not to interact with the unsaved people of the world, otherwise you'd have to leave the world altogether." That would be ridiculous. And so here in the remainder, in verses 25 through 34, Christ gives us his assurance that as we give him the priority to which he is entitled, to which he calls us to, that he will provide for everything that is necessary in the life that we live on earth. He demands everything from us, but he also promises to provide everything that we need as we follow him.

Look at verse 25. He says, "Therefore," it connects verse 24 with verse 25. You can't serve God in money and so you have to choose to serve God alone, he says, "and therefore, because that's true, Christ says, let me tell you that you do not need to be anxious about your life. If you belong to me," Christ says, "I will provide and care for

everything that pertains to your earthly life, and you need not have any fear or anxiety about it." And so in verse 25 he says, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" And then he reinforces it in such simple language, such simple pictures. He says, "Look at the birds. They don't have barns. Your Father feeds them. Look at the lilies of the field. Look at the spectacular beauty that they have. Know that God provides them and clothes them, the flowers of the field in that beauty. And if God will do such things for the lesser elements of his creation, know that he will do it for his children even more abundantly." Verses 30 and 33, "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all." You just keep your priorities straight. You just remember what is central in this walk with God. Verse 33, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," as it has been expounded in Matthew 6, "and all these things will be added to you." "You need not fear anything in life," Christ says to his disciples. "If you're following me, all that you need will be provided for you along the way." Just keep the first things first and walk with God.

And so, he premises that promise on the reality of God's providence, that God orders all of the details of our lives, and because he orders those things, because he loves us, he will certainly provide everything that we need along the way. God knows you need physical things for this physical existence, but, beloved, that does not reverse your order of priorities. So rather than neglecting God for a love of money, you seek God first and trust him for what he gives. Verses 33 and 34 one more time, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Beloved, one thing's obvious, is that if you and I are growing in this walk, there will be an inevitable consequence. If you and I are growing in this walk with God, God will teach us not to love the world and sometimes that will come with some pain. You learn this through Scripture, you know, "Do not love the world or the things in the world," 1 John 2:15. God teaches us this through the word, but also he brings to us sorrows and trials and difficulties that wean us from our love and affection of this world. When you see that this world is full of treachery, troubles and tribulations, you start to realize, "You know what? There's a sense in which I don't like it here. I don't like it here. I don't like all of the trouble of this world." And understand, understand that that can be said not from a spirit of resentment, but for an appreciation of the kingdom of God that is yet to come, and of being in the presence of a God who loves us, who never changes, who never fails us, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. The more the tribulations assault and make this world unpleasant, the sweeter the kingdom of God, the sweeter the person of our Lord Jesus becomes, he who loved us and gave himself up for us. But as we walk through all of those things, we learn to respond to God, learn to respond to circumstances here in Matthew 6. It's a walk of privacy, a walk of prayer, a walk of priorities, and a

walk that depends upon the providence of God along the way. Beloved, few chapters of Scripture could be more impactful on your life or relevant to your daily living. I encourage you to be with us as we walk through this together in the days to come.

Let's pray.

Gracious Father, when we see the evil in this world and know that Satan is the god of this world, the father of lies, and that this world is filled with his servants, it seems the most natural thing of all to reject that, to push it away, and to embrace this walk with God that is found exclusively in the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear Father, dear Father, upon whom we depend for our life and breath and everything that is vital to this existence, dear Father, we pray that in the days to come, you would indeed teach and train us in this walk with God, and that there would be many who would grow in grace as a result, that you would call some out of darkness and into your marvelous light, your marvelous kingdom. Just bless us as we seek to walk with you through your word in the days to come. May you comfort those whose hearts are hurting. May you bless and help those who are sick and physically failing. Father, may you help us set our eyes on Christ and find our full sufficiency and satisfaction in him and in him alone. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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