

[Thought for the Day – Week Commencing Sunday 14th February 2021.](#)

Matthew 6:1-4 New International Version – UK

¹ **‘Be careful not to practise your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.**

² **‘So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

Jesus teaching continues with the subject of giving to the needy. This should not be done in such a way as to draw attention to ourselves and our generosity, giving in secret is meant to keep us humble but does secrecy hide a mean streak in our giving? Let us give generously and secretly so our Father in Heaven is blessed by what we do. Pray for those in need and pray for the gifts we make in secret will make a difference and bless others.

Matthew 6:5-8 New International Version - UK

⁵ **‘And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.**

Similarly, Jesus urges us not to make a great show of our piety praying in public so people can be impressed with our devotion. Instead, Jesus tells us to pray behind closed doors – unseen by any but the Father in Heaven. Praise the Father that we can share with him in secret and He will answer our prayers.

Matthew 6:5-8 New International Version - UK

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Jesus also warns against long prayers – another way of those seeking approval of man for their devotion, to use long complicated words – Jesus invites us to keep our prayers simple, straightforward and believe God hears us because he already knows our needs, rather than because we use the ‘right’ words. The prayers of the heart, deep, sincere, full of love and praise are very special – which God desires more than eloquent phrases and ‘babbling like pagans’. Give thanks that our prayers, whispered in secret are heard and will be answered.

Matthew 6:9-10 New International Version - UK

⁹ ***This, then, is how you should pray:***

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

***¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.***

Jesus in teaching his disciples to pray gives us a pattern for our prayers. To begin with acknowledging God as Father, praising His name, showing reverence, and seeking His will. Are your prayers like this? Pray the Lord's Prayer, acknowledging Jesus is King and seek His will for you today.

Matthew 6:11-15 New International Version - UK

¹¹ ***Give us today our daily bread.***

¹² ***And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.***

¹³ ***And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.”***

¹⁴ ***For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.***

The prayer Jesus taught His disciples continues with meeting our own needs, our daily needs for food, clothes and shelter, our need for forgiveness and our need for protection. Clearly Jesus expected His disciples to pray each day – do you? Give thanks that we can come before our Father with our daily needs and that He gives us all we need each day.

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Jesus outlines the principle of forgiveness, to receive forgiveness we must also be willing to forgive, to have short accounts with God, means also letting go the debts that are owed to us. Lack of forgiveness leads us to great harm, not to the one with whom we fail to forgive, but to ourselves. To forgive is the first step to freedom, to be forgiven by God sets us free indeed. Give thanks that our sins are forgiven and pray for the strength and wisdom to forgive others.

Matthew 6:16-18 New International Version - UK

¹⁶ ***When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.***

Fasting, like giving and prayer, should not be something we do to gain approval of others, it is something we should do before God and in secret – a sacrifice we make that only He knows about. Do you fast in secret? Give thanks for our daily food and ask for help to fast, when it is appropriate, and to do so without seeking the approval of others.