

# Understanding True Kingdom Piety

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good. Well, let's open our Bibles now at Matthew's Gospel, chapter 6. Our minister, Willie, is going to be continuing his series of sermons from the Sermon on the Mount, and he will be taking part of chapter 6 in Matthew's Gospel for this morning's sermon.

You'll find that on page 811 in the Big Hardback Bibles, if you have one. And I'm reading from Matthew 6, verses 1 to 24, words of Jesus addressed to his disciples.

Matthew 6, verse 1. Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

[ 1 : 16 ] And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.

Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But 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.

And 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. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Pray then like this. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[ 2 : 21 ] For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces, that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

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

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, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body, so if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.

[ 3 : 32 ] But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 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. Amen. This is the word of the Lord to our hearts. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, please do turn with me to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 6, the passage that we read, page 811 in the Church Visitors' Bibles.

A passage all about understanding true kingdom piety. It is important to keep reminding yourselves what the Sermon on the Mount is all about. It is about the practice of real Christianity.

It's about the manners of real, true godliness. People often have their own ideas of what Christianity is, what it looks like, what it ought to be like. Well, here it is from Jesus Christ himself.

[ 4 : 44 ] It's important, if you take issue with Christianity, to make sure that you're taking issue with the real thing, not some misplaced or mistaken idea of it.

Here is the real thing from the mouth of the Lord Jesus himself. And what he is expounding is authentic Christian morality, the real righteousness that God wants from us.

And we've seen that far from being about mere religious rules, and regulations. In fact, it's much more to do with right relationships. At its heart, it is all about grasping the responsibilities of true kingdom people to show that true reality of their relationship with the Father in heaven, to show it here in their lives on earth, to show it in visible ways, in tangible ways, in real ways.

So it's all about living heavenly relationships on earth now. But Jesus is quick to tell us that we'll only be able to do that and live these ways if heaven's realities are, in fact, deep in our hearts now. Or to put it succinctly, true kingdom morality must flow out of a true kingdom mentality. That's what this section in Matthew 6, 1 to 7, 12 is all about.

[ 6 : 10 ] We saw last time that the key to the whole passage is right in the center. These verses 19 to 24 of chapter 6. And they get to the very heart of what it means to have this true kingdom mentality, a true kingdom perspective, as we might call it.

Verse 22, the healthy eye is the thing that alone can fill your life with light. You'll only have that. You'll only have clear-sighted kingdom outlook on life if, says Jesus, you know where your true treasure is and where your real home is, so that you're determined that it is treasure in heaven and not on earth that will fill your horizons and dictate your whole life's thinking and being and doing in this world.

A true kingdom perspective, in other words, means that your heart, the control center of your life, is possessed not by earth and the things of earth, but by heaven.

Not by the things which will be destroyed or stolen, by moth or rust or thief, but by the permanent world of Christ's heavenly kingdom, which can never be destroyed, which can never be stolen away.

But when that is your outlook on life, then everything in your life will be shaped by that true perspective. From the piety of our devotional lives to the priorities in our daily lives and ordinary things.

[ 7 : 41 ] A real kingdom perspective will transform both our daily worship, if you like, and our daily walk as we live day by day in this world. There will be all the difference in the world, in the devotional piety and in the daily priorities between a person whose heart is rooted in heaven and with the things of Christ's eternal kingdom, and someone else who, though they may profess Christ, actually their heart is rooted in the things of this world.

So today and next Sunday, we're going to look at how these sections show us Jesus both instructing us in the truth and also exposing the truth about where our hearts really are.

Because Jesus' point is this. The truth, the invisible reality of where our deepest hearts really are, it can be seen. It really is visible.

And it's visible in two quite contrary approaches that there are in the lives of those who claim to be Christians, claim to be disciples of Jesus. Two totally contrary approaches to devotional piety and to our daily priorities throughout our lives.

Jesus is saying that the character of our devotional life and of our ordinary daily lives, that that exposes the truth, actually, of what is deep in our unseen hearts.

[ 9 : 07 ] So today, let's look at verses 1 to 18 of chapter 6, which is all about understanding true kingdom piety, the kind of devotional life that God really does want from his people and what he doesn't want.

What kind of worship does God really want from us? That's the question. Well, the key message of these verses is absolutely plain. True kingdom piety is a life of personal devotion, lived to the Father and for the Father.

It's a life lived wholly in the sight of God, not in the sight of man. And that image of sight that Jesus focuses on in verses 22 and 23, about seeing clearly, that actually is the theme of each one of these paragraphs also.

You'll see it's summed up in verse 4 and in verse 6 and in verse 18. What we need to see clearly is that it is only God who sees all in our hearts.

And it doesn't matter a whit about anything else but what God sees of our lives of devotion to him. A healthy perspective, you see, has a clear-sighted view of the future.

[10:23] And therefore what counts is what God sees, the eternal God, not what man sees, not what this passing world might see of us. Now it's not, notice, it's not that the real Christian is not interested in reward.

Jesus does not say that. No, in fact, we treasure reward. We look for real treasure too but not in this world and not as this world does.

We are not concerned with worldly recognition here and now. Rather, we're content to trust Jesus for our life now and to trust that it's all about treasure and reward in the future.

Treasure and reward which really is permanent. So look at verse 1. Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Verse 1 gives the principle. Our devotional life, our piety, our spiritual duty, the righteousness that we do and must do is not to be done in order to be seen and rewarded by man in terms of earthly reward.

[11:37] Not for that. But rather, it is to be done to be seen by God and it is to be seeking his reward alone, a truly heavenly treasure which will never spoil our faith.

That is what we're to be seeking. That's a clear principle in a sense. All we need is verse 1 but of course, Jesus is a teacher and he gives us three examples to illustrate what he means.

Three pillars of devotional life of Israel he takes. Prayer, fasting and giving and he shows how this applies in these different areas. And he's assuming that these things are ongoing duties for his own followers in his own kingdom.

Remember, Matthew's gospel in particular is very keen to show us that Christianity is not new. It's a continuity and it's a fulfillment indeed of all of the faith of Israel. So we shouldn't be surprised that these things continue.

We can only deal briefly with these things today. We could spend a lot longer on them but we can clearly get the main message of what Jesus is telling us. So let's look at the verses.

[12:42] So look at verses 2 to 4 first of all where Jesus' first example is Christian giving. Here he's talking about a spiritual duty for God's people that has an outward focus on others. Notice Jesus assumes generous giving as a duty.

And he's not talking here just about the duty to support church structures and church ministry things that we benefit from. He's talking here about giving to the needy.

He's talking about giving out of love and compassion. The marks of a true Christian are that he gives from the heart and therefore of course he will be generous in his giving just as God is generous in his giving.

Apostle James says this is the religion that is true and undefiled before God the kind that doesn't forget orphans and widows in their affliction. And Paul also urges that same kind of compassion and help and support doesn't he?

Especially within the household of faith he says to the Galatians but not exclusively. And John of course very pointedly says doesn't he in his epistle that if we ourselves have worldly goods and we see our brother in need and close our hearts to him how can God's love the love of the Father possibly be in us?

[14:01] Now a true kingdom perspective sees straight and it will give from the heart because heaven's love and heaven's generosity possesses our hearts.

It's quite straightforward. Of course Jesus isn't telling us to be undiscerning. He's not saying that we've got to bankrupt ourselves by a great sense of obligation to every single charity that comes across our path every tin that's rattled in our face every chugger that grabs us and wants to set up a direct debit.

No of course he's not saying that. In this country I'm told that the biggest charity support is for the National Trust and it's closely followed by animal charities you'd expect that in our sentimental society and cancer charities and that sort of thing.

Well I'm not against the National Trust I'm in the National Trust. That's not what Jesus is talking about here though. He's not talking about that generalized kind of charitable giving.

But neither is he saying that the only things that should ever matter for a Christian are funding and sponsoring evangelism and teaching and things like that.

[15:12] Of course that is the church's absolute priority. That is the mission of the church nothing else. We are commanded in the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations.

That is the mission of the church. But there are many many things that have a call rightly on our compassion and our generosity. Think about persecuted believers for example.

All over the world today in many places there are those who are being deeply persecuted and in great need. Many impoverished believers. If we don't help suffering Christian brothers and sisters who is going to do that?

Precious few people I would think. Not least those that God brings personally into our own path. A Christian brother who comes into our path and has need. How can we close our heart to them? What comes into our path is a church. How can we not fulfill our obligations to them? But notice Jesus' key point is that even this giving of our substance outwardly to others and to their needs is above all as he says in verse 4 actually not just outward but an upward act.

[16:26] It's for the father. He says above all it's for his eyes and indeed if only he sees and knows then that's all that matters.

So verse 2 says there's no need to trumpet it. In fact we mustn't do that because it's not for others' eyes. It's not for them to see. It's not for them to be impressed by our giving. In fact if that's our motive and that's the outcome then it's not giving really is it?

It's sponsorship. It's giving in order to get something in return. That's why a business sponsors a sporting event or a football team isn't it? It may very well be that the owner of the business is a fanatical football fan for that particular club.

Maybe he's a very kind and generous person but it's a hard headed business decision to sink all that money into the football club or the sports star.

That's why when that sports star whatever falls from grace then Nike or whoever else it is is running away from them as fast as their clever training shoes can take them. Maria Sharapova or Tiger Woods or whoever it is who's been naughty.

[17:38] And sometimes in the church our giving can become that can't it? It can become sponsorship whether it's financial giving or whether it's giving of our time or our talents.

It can be giving that is done actually to be seen by others to get credit with others to gain status in the church to get reward. But real Christian giving says Jesus isn't sponsorship.

It's totally different. It has no ulterior earthly motive at all. It's for no earthly return. It's giving says Jesus in verse 3 that is given freely and notice forgetfully not even your left hand knowing what your right hand has done.

It's amnesic giving. That's Jesus' real focus here notice. You yourself are not to be calculating and seeking something out of your giving or indeed are being resentful if your contributions of your time or talents or money or whatever are not given the recognition that you feel they ought to be given. He's not so much talking about anonymous giving as though it was wrong for a Christian ever to give by direct debit or sign a gift aid form or anything like that. No, no, no. There are some Christians who make a great fuss about anonymous giving and refuse to do any of those things and say, oh, Jesus condemns those things.

[19:00] actually, sometimes those very people are doing the very thing Jesus is telling us not to do here because it is for self-reward that they do it.

So they can say to themselves or perhaps to other people, oh, I'm really giving in secret. I'm really obeying Jesus to the letter. Now, very often because it's anonymous, the sort of implication too is that it must be very significant and others will assume that you're very, very generous.

Well, that's reward for you, isn't it, for men? In fact, it might actually be quite the reverse that's true. Well, of course, sometimes there's a very real and proper reason for giving to be quite anonymous but not for that kind of reason.

And Jesus says, it's not about this outward letter of the command here. Can't you see, I'm talking about your heart attitude to all of this. And a true kingdom mentality means glad and generous giving with complete personal detachment from it.

It's giving without strings attached. It's giving without fuss. It's giving without memory. The left hand even is unaware. So you give but you don't keep reminding yourself just how generous you've been and just how thankful and how grateful others ought to be for what you've given.

[20:25] For one thing, by the way, that's a sure route to disappointment and bitterness, isn't it? Because the sad truth is that often even when we are recipients of great generosity, we have very short memories for that.

And we show much less gratitude to others than we should do. But as givers, you see, Jesus is saying our memories should be short. We're not to harbor reminders of what we've given or what we've done for someone.

We're not to harbor in our mind, well, they really owe me big time given all that I've done for them. No! Forget! Because that's not giving. That's an attitude of sponsorship.

And we're to see that it's not about that. It's all about our secret, unseen relationship with the Father in heaven. And he sees and he knows and he is glad when our hearts show that giving and that generosity and that love that reflects his.

Because it shows him that heaven really is in our hearts. And heaven really rules our hearts. And we know, says verse 4, that the Father who sees in secret will reward that kind of attitude.

[ 21 : 37 ] And it's similar in our whole approach to prayer, verses 5 to 15. Here we're dealing with a spiritual duty with a direct upward focus to God himself. And again, Jesus assumes prayer for his followers.

When you pray, he begins. Now again, some people misunderstand this. They look at verse 6 about praying privately in your room and they say, well, that means we don't need to pray together with other believers.

Or some people even say, well, that means we shouldn't pray together only privately in our room. Don't be silly. For one thing, the you, although it is singular in verse 6 and all the other verses here, it is you plural.

If you have an old version, you'll see it's ye. And in verse 8, where Jesus teaches his disciples specifically how to pray, it is plural. And he assumes that they're praying together, doesn't he? Because he addresses them all in the plural and he says, when you pray, you pray not my father, but our father. In fact, if you read the entire New Testament, you will not find a single command or exhortation to pray that doesn't assume that that prayer is corporate and together with others.

[ 22 : 44 ] So actually, there's a better argument for saying we don't ever need to pray alone than that we don't ever need to pray with other believers and the rest of the church. And obviously, if we never pray together with other Christians and with the whole church body, well, we're flying in the face of all the commands to pray in the New Testament, aren't we?

We have to think about that. The New Testament just can't conceive of a Christian believer who doesn't pray with his family. But here, of course, Jesus assumes that individual prayer, personal prayer, is also a part of our life.

And again, he's driving at the same thing, isn't he? The motive for that prayer. And he's telling us that there's a vast difference between the prayer of a true believer and a true disciple of the kingdom and the empty prayer of both, both, the religious hypocrite, as he calls him in verse 5, the moralist, the Pharisee, and the pagan Gentile, the amoral materialist.

It's very important to notice how Jesus considers both these attitudes to be in stark contrast to real Christian prayer. The man of religion, verse 5, the Pharisee, the hypocrite, that's what he calls the Pharisees all through the gospel, he prays in order to be seen.

He prays in order to manipulate man's attitude to him so that he gets praise from others. And he is so rewarded, says Jesus. Look, what an upright, godly person he is who prays so much in the synagogue.

[ 24 : 17 ] Well, he's had his reward, says Jesus. People say that. But the pagan Gentile, verse 7, the materialist who heaps up empty phrases, he prays to manipulate God's attitude towards him.

Lots of words, lots of prattling, lots of mantras in order to get things from God that he wants. manipulating people, manipulating God. But in contrast to both of these, Jesus says the true believer prays not to manipulate God or other people because, no, he has a real and living relationship with his heavenly father.

He's his lord and master. He's his savior and lord and his friend. He's his teacher and his provider. He's his great joy and his great delight.

And so his prayer is to submit to God's desires for his kingdom and for his world and for our own lives. And that's what the simple pattern that we call the Lord's Prayer demonstrates.

Teaches us how to pray as true disciples of Jesus in contrast to both of these others. Let me just try and sum up the kingdom mentality in this prayer with three Ps.

[ 25 : 28 ] First, it's personal, isn't it? Verse 6, it's to our father. We need him and we want him and that's all that matters. That's why it can be done in the secret place.

No one has to see. The point is, it's personal. It's a personal transaction between you and the Lord and no other concerns, no other relationships in this world have any bearing on it at all.

So we pray personally to our father who sees and who knows and who's listening and who will reward those who thus pray with the knowledge of his presence, with the blessing of real personal fellowship with him.

It's personal prayer. And second, it is about petition. The Lord's Prayer shows us that. Some people scorn this idea of prayer.

They say, oh, prayer is not just a shopping list of things for God. But of course, it's all about the attitude of heart and it's also all about who shapes the shopping list, isn't it?

[ 26 : 32 ] For sure, it's not just pagan materialism cloaked up in pious words. It's not just heaping up empty words so that we can try and get God to give us what we want in life. Certainly not that kind of shopping list.

It is easy for us to slip into that and to think, don't we, what we're asking in our prayers for ourselves, what we're asking for others, what are the things that dominate our prayers?

No, verse 7, we're not to pray like that. Certainly not. Our petition, though, is to be led by God himself and what he tells us to ask from him. Verse 8 says, he knows our need before we ask, but he doesn't therefore say, so there's no need to ask.

No, rather, he teaches us to pray with that trusting faith that recognizes that God knows our needs and rejoices, therefore, to pray for what God tells us we need.

In other words, we're to pray acknowledging a real proper dependency within that relationship, the relationship that we have with our Creator and our Lord.

[ 27 : 39 ] Children are like that, aren't they? Children don't know all their needs. Their parents know their needs before they ask. They're utterly dependent on their parents.

But every parent, every father or mother is delighted when the little one comes to them and says, Daddy, will you help me with this? Mommy, will you help me with this? We love it as parents when little ones ask us that and the Father in heaven loves it when we say, Father, will you help us with this?

That's real relationship, isn't it? It's so simple, so natural, not endless words and mantras and chanting and formulas. That's paganism, according to Jesus.

No showy and impressive displays of piety and so on. That's dead religiosity. That's empty. God hates that. No simple asking, Father, will you help me?

Verse 11, will you give us? Verse 12, will you forgive us? Verse 13, will you lead us? It's personal and it's petition given by God.

[ 28 : 50 ] But of course, and this is the third three, it is asking with priorities. Verse 10, the kingdom always comes first, doesn't it? We'll see that later in verse 33, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and that goes for our prayers as well as for everything else in life.

Look at verse 9, you pray like this, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Well, of course, that must be our first thought in prayer. Because we're to pray from our hearts if we belong to Jesus and if we belong to him, then heaven and heaven's priorities are in our hearts.

And so heaven's priorities and heaven's concerns and heaven's goals will possess us and will possess our prayer life too. Not endless concerns about our own prosperity, our own health, our own earthly gain, our own passing achievements.

No. Prayer that's truly personal, that brings petitions humbly to God, which are shaped by the priorities of his heavenly eternal kingdom.

[ 30 : 08 ] These are the things that are to fill our thoughts and our words and our deeds and our prayers, says the Lord Jesus. Worth thinking about, isn't it? It's worth asking ourselves just what are the real priorities in our prayers as a church, in my prayers personally?

What are our chief purposes? Are we, perhaps, trying to manipulate God to bring him into line with our purposes and priorities in life?

Or are we, as Jesus teaches, are we really asking him to bring us into line with his purpose and his priorities for this world and for eternity?

giving too much thought to wanting to manipulate God or manipulate other people's view of us and what they think we're like? Well, the third example Jesus gives to us is our attitude to fasting in verses 16 to 18, to self-deprivation for God's sake.

And here the spiritual duty, I suppose, has an inward and a self-word reference. And again, although fasting is not commanded anywhere directly in this way in the New Testament, Jesus seems to assume that it will be a natural part of our spiritual discipline.

[ 31 : 25 ] And that may indeed involve particular practices of abstaining from food at certain times and for certain periods. Actually, fasting is back in vogue. It's all our age these days. Everybody I know who's on a diet is on a fasting diet, the 5-2 diet.

It seems to be very effective and very healthy. But I don't think Jesus is talking, in fact, I know Jesus is not talking about the 5-2 diet. In the Bible, fasting is always associated with prayer.

And it illustrates a wider principle, which is simply this, that we are always to be people who are willing to give up something material, even something good and necessary, even something healthy sometimes, for the sake of devotion to our Father in heaven.

It's an outward and tangible expression of our love and devotion to him. That's often necessary, isn't it, in any relationship, that there needs to be sacrifice, sacrifice of time, sacrifice of other things, for the sake of devoting yourself heartily to that relationship, so that relationship will flourish.

If you are never willing to sacrifice, for example, in a marriage, then that marriage will flounder, it will not flourish. And so it is with God. Again, it is easy to drift into spiritual sham, into hypocrisy.

[ 32 : 47 ] Verse 16, that's the point Jesus is making. It's very easy to do all of this not really out of love to God, but just to impress other people and therefore to make ourselves feel that in fact we're very spiritual and we're very pious.

But Jesus says to us, no, when you fast, don't look gloomy like the hypocrites. They disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Well, they've received the reward of being seen and honored by others.

But no, you're not to do that. The whole New Testament teaches us that as Christian people we are constantly to be those who mortify the flesh, that is, who put to death worldly appetites for the sake of our spiritual health.

We know, don't we, when appetite is out of balance. It leads to ill health. It leads to anorexia on the one hand or obesity on the other hand. And in our spiritual life, similarly, we must have a right balance in our appetites.

Earthly appetites must not squeeze out heavenly ones. And that means that many good things, even gifts of God, at times we may have to do without them in order for us to live fruitful lives to God.

[ 34 : 11 ] We're all called to that kind of fasting, to that kind of sacrificial living. Actually, that is the vow that every one of us who is a member of the church here made to God and to everybody else in the church when we joined this fellowship.

We vowed, didn't we, to give sacrificially of our time, our talents, and our money for the sake of Christ and his church. So that we ourselves would have less of these things for ourselves. we would fast in order to better serve the Lord Jesus Christ and his heavenly kingdom here as a fellowship together. And Jesus says here in verse 17, we are to do this with no sign in our face or in our demeanor to flag up to others just how sacrificial we are really being and just how grateful others ought to be and how impressed others ought to be with our commitment.

There's to be no ostentation, no drawing attention to our self-deprivation for the kingdom's sake. That's what he's saying, no hypocrisy. It's so easy, isn't it, to want others to know just how much we are doing for Christ and the church.

Because we crave attention, we crave recognition. And it's also very easy, isn't it, to be bitter, to be resentful when our sacrifices aren't noticed or aren't given the recognition that we think they ought to be or they deserve.

[ 35 : 38 ] So when somebody says to us, oh Fred, I see you're on such and such duty again. And you say, yes, I seem to be doing it more and more, but well, it's my duty, you know, and I'm always glad to help.

Of course, nobody realizes how long it takes. Nobody realizes just how much is involved in all of this. They don't see, but I would never want to let anyone down, so I keep at it. I struggle on. It's easy to feel that, isn't it? You know that sort of attitude. You know it in your own heart. Well, I know it in my heart.

And what it betrays is a need to be needed, isn't it? It's turning giving into a kind of idolatry, into a way of fulfilling your own needs and serving your own sense of self-worth.

You're giving and serving others, but actually, you're doing it for yourself. It's fasting, but it's not really for God or for others' sake.

[ 36 : 38 ] It's for your own sake. It's for your own reward in terms of wanting to extract the appreciation of others, the recognition of others, so they know just how vitally important your role is and your service to them.

No one, I think, has better captured this perversion of giving into self-seeking and self-serving than C.S. Lewis. Lewis in his description of Mrs. Fidget. If you read *The Four Loves*, you'll recognize this. I'm thinking, he says, of Mrs. Fidget, who died a few months ago. It is really astonishing how her family have brightened up. The drawn look has gone from the husband's face.

He begins to be able to laugh. The younger boy, whom I'd always thought an embittered, peevish little creature, turns out to be quite human. The elder, who was hardly ever at home except when he was in bed, is nearly always there now.

And he's begun to reorganize the garden. The girl, who was always supposed to be delicate, now has riding lessons, dances all night, and plays any amount of tennis. Even the dog, who was never allowed out except on a lead, is now a well-known member of the lamppost club in their road.

[ 37 : 45 ] Mrs. Fidget often said that she lived for her family. And it was not untrue. Everyone in the neighborhood knew it. She lives for her family, they said. What a wife and mother.

She did all the washing. True, she did it badly. And they could have afforded to send it out to her laundry. And they frequently begged her not to do it, but she did. There was always a hot lunch for anyone who was at home, and always a hot meal at night, even in midsummer.

They implored her not to provide this. It made no difference. She was living for her family. She always sat up to welcome you home if you were out late at night.

Two or three in the morning, it made no odds. You'd always find the frail, pale, weary face awaiting you, like a silent accusation. Which meant, of course, that you couldn't with any decency go out very often at all.

Mrs. Fidget, as she so often said, would work her fingers to the bone for her family. They couldn't stop her. Nor could they, being decent people, quite sit still and watch her do it.

[ 38 : 51 ] They had to help. Indeed, they were always having to help. That is, they did things for her to help her do things for them, which they didn't want done. The vicar says, Mrs.

Fidget is now at rest. Let's hope she is. What's quite certain is that her family are. But Jesus says, you, when you sacrifice things in order to serve the Lord and his church, don't look pale and weary and gloomy, your face like a silent accusation, like Mrs.

Fidget, ensuring that everyone knows how you work your fingers to the bone for the church. Now anoint your head. Wash your face. Smile.

Be joyful and happy in your sacrificial service, even when no one notices. Don't complain or draw attention to how much you're giving up and your dedication for others.

Remember for whom you're fasting. Remember your life of personal devotion is to the Father, and it's for the Father. And, verse 18, he sees even in secret, and he will reward you.

[ 40 : 08 ] And so you can be always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor, none of it, is ever in vain. It's your own attitude of heart and mind.

That's what will tell us, isn't it? If we really are doing it for the Father, or if actually we're working our fingers to the bone for ourselves, for the praise of others, for the tangible rewards of recognition. You see how all these three areas, all these examples of giving and of prayer and fasting, they all point to exactly the same thing. It's all about the heart attitude in which we act.

The whole mentality that drives these outwards acts of devotion and piety and service. A worldly attitude seeks man's praise, and it gets it now.

But ultimately, says Jesus, it receives no lasting reward. They have already received their reward. But in total contrast, the true kingdom mentality, it wants and it gets the Father's attention and his everlasting reward.

[ 41 : 27 ] Even though as chapter 5, verse 11 reminded us, remember, that now it may attract nothing but scorn and slander and reviling and abuse.

And that's why only a kingdom perspective, a true kingdom perspective, can enable you to live like this. Only if we see with a single eye the truth that God sees, all that is done in secret, only if we see with that single eye will we be able to serve with a single heart that is unstained by worldly idolatry.

And we'll only see the whole world clearly like that if our true treasure is heavenly treasure, and if that really is possessing our hearts.

So there's Jesus' clear message about the attitude, the mentality that underlies all our outward expression of worship in our devotional lives. In our stewardship, our giving and generosity, in our supplications, public and private prayer, and in our sacrifices, our time, our talents, and our money, material things given and given up for the sake of Christ and his church.

And Jesus' challenge to us is this, what are you really doing it all for? For heaven's reward and praise? Or for the praise and the reward of mere men?

[ 42 : 55 ] Or more importantly still, who are you really doing it all for? For men? Who will only see it if you make jolly sure they do see it and know it? Or for the Father in heaven?

Who sees absolutely everything, however unnoticed it is by anybody else. Everything that's done for him and for his precious people, his church. Do we really understand true kingdom piety?

The worship that God delights in? The devotional life that's not just rote religion, but reflects real relationship with the Father in heaven. It's terribly tempting, isn't it?

Terribly tempting to want to have the praise of men, of this world. The praise of the church. And we love it, of course, when we do get praise. And actually, it is right for us to give praise, certainly.

And we should be ready to praise others a lot more than we are. But that's very different, isn't it, for being praise seekers ourselves. You can be that, says Jesus, and you can hardly realize it.

[ 43 : 58 ] And you do receive the reward that you seek, but, but, beware of doing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward, no reward from your Father in heaven.

We'll understand true kingdom piety when our devotional life is a life of personal devotion to the Father and all for the Father.

our Father in heaven who sees in secret and will reward all, all who do that truly out of love for him and out of love for his beloved people.

So may God help us to live for his eyes only. Amen. Let's pray. Lord, open our eyes, we pray. And open the eyes of our hearts so that we would see clearly and completely with heaven's perfect sight.

And so that we will be liberated to live only for you, only for your eyes, only for your glory, and only for your praise of us.

[ 45 : 16 ] And may we do so all the days of our lives. For Jesus' sake. Amen.