

Matthew 6b

What was the third form of religious hypocrisy that Jesus denounced (v. 16)? The deliberate attempt to create an appearance of fasting. The hypocrites disfigured their faces when they fasted in order to look gaunt, haggard, and miserable. But Jesus says it is ridiculous to try to appear holy.¹

Hypocritical fasting occurred in Israel long before Jesus' day (Isaiah 58:1-7; Jeremiah 14:12; Zechariah 7:5-6), but the Pharisees were notorious for it.

What were the specific instructions Jesus gave in regard to fasting (vv. 17-18)? Do it in a way that is not obvious to those watching. Do nothing that would attract attention to the fact that they were fasting. Again, Jesus promised that the Father who sees the worship that His children offer in secret will reward them (cf. vv. 3-4).

In all three examples of Pharisaic "righteousness"—giving, praying and fasting—Jesus spoke of hypocrites, public showiness, receiving their reward in full when their actions are done before men, acting in secret and being rewarded by the Father, who sees or "knows," when one's actions are done secretly.²

What negative financial guidance did Jesus give (v. 19)? Don't work to accumulate worldly material possessions. What Jesus forbade here was selfishness. Misers hoard more than they need (James 5:2-3). Materialists always want more than they have. It is the love of money that is a root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10).³

Treasures built here are subject to decay (cf. James 5:2-3) or theft, whereas treasures deposited in heaven can never be lost. One's attitude toward wealth is another barometer of righteousness.

What positive financial guidance did Jesus give (v. 20)? Instead, work to accumulate heavenly treasures. Treasures deposited in heaven can never be lost to decay, rust or thievery.

How do you define treasures in heaven? Treasures in heaven are rewards that await those who live biblically in order to please and glorify God. Treasures are a product of doing kingdom work with the right motives/heart. Building treasures in heaven will result in the Lord's affirmation one day when we hear Him say, "Well done good and faithful servant."

What is the relationship between the heart and treasure (v. 21)? The thing that a person values most highly ("treasure") inevitably occupies the center of his or her heart (Luke 12:34). The heart is the center of the personality, and it controls the intellect, emotions, and will.⁴ This verse is a call to introspection.

What truth does Jesus illustrate by the example of the eye (vv. 22-23)? Jesus is talking about spiritual light. The eye is the lamp of the body. Simply, the idea is that "light" comes into the body through the eye. If our eyes were blind, we would live in a "dark" world.

1 Corinthians 2:14 *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The man without the Spirit is unable to see. The light cannot penetrate the darkness. He is spiritually blind. The man with the Spirit.....can see and understand and enjoy spiritual truth. His life is marked by pure motives as he lays up treasures in heaven knowing that this is the only true security. The Holy Spirit is the source of "light."

What is the principle that Jesus lays out in v. 24? The impossibility of living for both God and for money is stated here in terms of masters and slaves. No one can serve two masters (Luke 16:13). One will inevitably take precedence in his loyalty and obedience. So it is with God and money. They present rival claims and a choice must be made. Either we will put God first and reject the rule of materialism or we will live for temporal things and refuse God's claim on our lives.⁵

What instructions does Jesus give next (v. 25)? Do not worry! He is mostly focused on the future and its uncertainties. In this passage Jesus strikes at the tendency to center our lives around food and clothing, thus missing life's real meaning. The problem is not so much what we eat and wear *today*, but what shall we eat in the future....next month/year? Such worry about the future is sin because it denies the love, wisdom, and power of God. It denies the love of God by implying that He doesn't care for us. It denies His wisdom by implying that He doesn't know what He is doing. And it denies His power by implying that He isn't able to provide for our needs.⁶

There may be greater sins than worry, but very certainly there is no more disabling sin."⁷

What is the illustration using the birds of the air (v. 26)? God's care for His creatures is pictured. The birds preach to us how unnecessary it is for us to worry. They neither sow nor reap, yet God feeds them. Since, in God's hierarchy of creation, we are of more value than the birds, we can surely expect God to take care of our needs.

How is the futility of worry described (v. 27)? Fretting cannot lengthen "one's life span" (Job 14:5; Psalm 139:16) any more than it can put food on one's table or clothes on one's back.

What is the illustration using the lilies of the field (vv. 28-30)? The lilies of the field neither toil nor spin, yet their beauty surpasses that of Solomon's royal garments. If God can provide such elegant apparel for wildflowers, which have a brief existence and are then used as fuel in the baking oven, He will certainly care for His people who worship and serve Him.⁸

What is Jesus' conclusion (vv. 31-32)? The conclusion is that we should not spend our lives in anxious pursuit of food, drink, and clothing for the future. The unconverted Gentiles live for the mad accumulation of material things, as if food and clothing were the whole of life. But it should not be so with Christians, who have a heavenly Father who knows, and will provide for, their basic needs.⁹

What promise did Jesus make in v. 33? The Lord, therefore, makes a covenant with His followers. He says, in effect, "If you will put God's interests first in your life, I will guarantee your future needs. If you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then I will see that you never lack the necessities of life."¹⁰

What is Jesus' final directive (v. 34)? This is God's "social security" program. The believer's responsibility is to live for the Lord, trusting God for the future with unshakable confidence that He will provide. One's job is simply a means of providing for current needs; everything above this is invested in the work of the Lord. We are called to live one day at a time: tomorrow can worry about its own things.¹¹

¹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1225.

² Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 33.

³ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Matthew*, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 211.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁵ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1226.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Matthew*, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 216.

⁸ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1227.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*