

UPPER ROOM SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY

Living the Life of the Beloved/Belonging: Matthew 5-7

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Spring-Summer, 2018

Lesson 12 – (June 3, 2018) Matthew 5:43-6:4

Lessons from Last Week:

- a. Selfish pride can cause you to resent and retaliate when others hurt you with their words and deeds.
- b. Resentment & retaliation escalate a spirit of fear within the human heart. This reaction can never bring inner peace!
- c. Reminding yourself of God's promise, that you are His Beloved & baptized child of God, can redirect your reactions from self-serving to God-glorifying responses.

Matthew 5:43-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor^[a] and hate your enemy.'

⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- a. "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." – the commonsense principle of hospitality and treatment of others
- b. "love your enemies and pray" –
 - a. "Love" – agape – the "beloved-empowered" choice to intentionally and unrelentingly offer good will to those who are hostile to you.
 - b. "pray" – offer prayer for their good and your own strength of faith
 - c. "that you may be children of your Father..." – when you are adopted into family of God, love becomes the new lens through which you approach others: As God has loved you, how will you love your enemies?
 - d. "evil...good...righteous...unrighteous..." – God demonstrates His agape love by showing no favoritism in generosity.
 - i. "sends rain" – your selfish pride will become indignant at God's generosity toward the "unrighteous."
 1. Matthew 20:15. Or are you envious because I am generous?
- c. "Be perfect" – (telios – complete). Loving your enemy and praying for him/her is the completion of the circular flow of God's grace to you, and from you to your enemies!
 - a. Romans 12:14, 20-21. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends

on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^[a] says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."^[b] ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- d. **The Beloved Life Principle #26:** Praying for those who abuse you deepens your gratitude for Jesus – who prays the same prayer for _____. You may have to protect yourself (and your family) from their physical or emotional abuse. Praying for God to _____ them creates a spiritual hedge around your heart.

Matthew 6:1-4 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

- a. **“Be careful not to practice your righteousness”** – the three (3) pillars of Jewish spirituality, in practical actions, was giving alms, prayer, and fasting. To be faithful in these was the foundation of a ‘good Jew.’
- b. **“in front of others to be seen by them” – “to be seen”** as the sole motive for your pious activities (service in the church & community) makes you dependent on what others think of you.
- a. **The Beloved Life Principle #27:** Eventually, what others _____ of you, can become more important than what God thinks of you, i.e. His beloved.
- c. **“no reward from your Father in heaven.”** – believers have already received the reward of a relationship with God through Christ. To “practice your righteousness” is to respond in gratitude for what God has already done for you!

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 honored 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.

- a. **“when you give to the needy”** – it is assumed that, as you are God’s beloved, you will be generous in caring materially for others in need. For Jews, giving alms held a power to earn forgiveness of sin (Tobit 12:8).
- b. **“do not announce it with trumpets...to be honored by others”**
- c. **“their reward in full” – “reward” (apechein)** – a payment (admiration, good reputation, temporal rewards) made for services rendered, no more or no less.
- d. **“that your giving may be in secret”** – Jesus reminds you, that “secret” or anonymous giving protects the giver from selfish pride.
- a. **Question:** In what ways might selfish pride & fear pose a spiritual threat to true generosity when giving to those in need?

- i. Giving only if there is a tax deduction for the gift.
- ii. Using guilt/shame to motivate people to “give their fair share.”
- iii. Demanding an ostentatious plaque to recognize a gift.
- iv. Unfairly judging the motives of generous givers.
- v. Unfairly judging the motives of the recipients.
- vi. Giving and expecting something in return.
- vii. Other?

e. “your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” –

- a. **The Beloved Life Principle #28:** The ultimate motive for giving generously is _____ for all that Jesus has done for you. Because of Him, you are already rich.

i. **2 Corinthians 8:9.** *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

- b. **The Beloved Life Principle #29:** The place where your life’s path crosses the path of a person-in-need, is the place where you meet _____.

i. **Matthew 25:40.** *“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’*