

# 12.5.24 am

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Date: 12 May 2024

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning. A warm welcome to the service this morning. It's good to see everyone. It's good to see some visitors with us as well this morning. You're especially welcome. There's tea and there's coffee at the end of the service and if you're able to stay behind, please do so.

A few intimations on the screen. A few on my page here as well, but I'm going to go through the ones on the screen just now. There's one or two corrections as well. Ladies' Fellowship meets tomorrow as usual and Little Fishers on Tuesday morning as usual 12 to 2. 10 to 12, sorry. Road to Recovery Tuesday night. Prayer meeting held on Wednesday here in person and on Zoom for those who can't physically make it.

Hicka Clay, I'm not sure I'm saying that right, but Gaelic Playgroup is on on Thursday at 10am. Come in, come in. And the service is next Sunday. The morning service will be taken by myself, God willing, and the evening service will be taken by the Reverend Ronnie Morrison, who was with us at the last communion from US. So he's going to take the evening service.

Church cleaning rota. Church cleaning rota. Got details there. Date for the September communion. Changed to the October weekend, 4th to 6th. Take a note of that, please.

Scott, I don't think it's confirmed accommodation yet, so if you're aware of property, which may be possible, then please get in touch with me and I can pass it on to Scott.

[ 1 : 3 0 ]     Annual WFM meeting, 7th of June in the Caber Féotel in Stornoway. Booking forms in the foyer and you have the total that was raised at the last community lunch for Bethesda.

This is one that needs slightly corrected, I think. You're warmly invited to Nicky's wedding at the church. I'm looking for Jeeves.

It says there on the 7th, and that is now correct. So I was told out there it's on the screen as the 8th, but it's actually the 7th. I know it's the 7th, so you now have a corrected information. Nicky and Jack are being married on the 7th of June, and if you are able to come along to that to join with them in that service, then please put that in your diaries.

It's a wee bit away, I know, but let's pray for them in advance of the wedding. And if you'd like to be there and are a Gaelic singer, please stay behind after the service for a rehearsal with Kirsty.

And you know as much about that as I do. A number of ongoing jobs, maintenance, tidying jobs, which are required around the church.

[ 2 : 4 3 ]     It's a longer intimation. It's basically if you feel you're able to help in any way and you've seen the intimation, please get in touch so we can organise that. Is that the last intimation yet?

OK, a couple more things. One is to say that on the 17th of May at half past seven, there's a Crossroads Care fundraiser, Sailor Work.

And if you see out in the foyer, there's a box, I think it's a bag, and there's donations of food that can be put in there. And the hope is to have a hamper that can be given out or something like that for that fundraiser.

So these, I think now, are all the intimations. So let's now worship God. Let's pray for a moment. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day.

And we thank you that you call us, you command us to be still and to know that you are God and that you are with us. And so we pray that you would still our minds, that you would clear our minds from all that might distract us.

[ 4 : 00 ] Even as we look at our notice sheet, we can see how busy life is. And we're thankful for all these things that we are able to attend to and able to get involved with.

But we pray that for this hour now, that you would clear our minds of anything that would distract us. And that you would enable us to fix our eyes upon Jesus.

And that you would still our hearts and enable us to worship you in spirit and in truth. Let me pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing now to God's praise the words of Psalm 8 on the screen.

How excellent in all the earth, Lord, our Lord, is thy name. We'll stand to sing to God's praise. How excellent in all the earth, Lord, our Lord, is thy name.

Who has thy glory far advanced above the starry frame.

[ 5 : 10 ] From infants and from siblings man, thou didst strength ordain.

For life was caused that so thou mightst be avenging for restraint.

When I look up unto the heavens which thy own fingers sprayed.

Unto the moon and to the stars which were by thee ordained.

Then say I bought his man that he remembered his by thee.

[ 6 : 19 ] Or what the son of man that thou so kind to him shouldst be.

For thou a little Lord hast him than the angels made.

With glory and with dignity the crowned has his head.

All thy hands worked the maize him, Lord, all on earth's feet did slay.

All sheep and oxen, yea, and beast that in the field do stray.

[ 7 : 27 ] Founds of the air, fish of the sea, all that passed through the sea.

How excellent in all the earth, Lord, our Lord, is thy name.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you once more that we can come to you in prayer. That we can come to the God who is excellent.

The God who excels over all people, all beings, all things. The God who is almighty, the God who is sovereign. The God who is holy.

[ 8 : 35 ] We thank you for the Lord. We thank you that we can come into your presence. Recognizing your greatness. Bowing before you in worship and yet addressing you as our Father.

And we thank you that this is not something that we have presumed to do. We would never presume to do that. But we thank you that this is the instruction of your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you that he came into this world to make it possible for us to call you our Father. We confess, Lord, that we are sinners and our sin holds us at a distance from you.

Our sin makes us enemies of God. And yet we thank you that whilst we were in that state of rebellion, how you did not leave us in that place of no hope.

But we thank you, Father, that you sent your Son. And he came into this world. What is man that he would be remembered by thee? And yet we thank you that we are remembered, that we are loved.

[ 9 : 48 ] We thank you that we can be saved in and through Jesus. We thank you that we can have our sins forgiven. We thank you that the barrier that held us back has been taken down.

We thank you that the distance between man and God has been removed. And that we can be reconciled with God. That we can even be called children of God.

And come to you and know the love of God as children before our Father. So we thank you, Father, for the wonder of the Gospel.

We thank you for the amazing good news that there is in Jesus. And we pray, Holy Spirit, that you would be moving in this place to help us to see our sin and our need.

And help us to see the Lord Jesus as the Savior, the one who came to take away our sin. And make it possible for us to be close with you.

[ 10 : 51 ] We pray, Lord, that you would hear us and help us as we bow before you in prayer. We thank you that you care for us. And, Lord, we can take anything to you in prayer.

And so, Lord, we take all the things that cause us anxiety, all the things that worry us. You know our hearts. You know our homes. You know the complexity of our lives.

You know the busyness. You know the things that cause us to fret. And we pray that you would help us in every point of need that we have. We pray for those who are struggling with their health.

Those who may be present. Many who are absent in their homes. Some in hospital. Some in care homes. We bring them to you, Lord. And we ask that you would minister to them.

And that where it's your will that you would lay your healing hands upon them. And where that is not the outcome that is going to come. We pray that there would be grace given to them day by day.

[ 11 : 57 ] That they would know your presence and your peace. And your help. We thank you that even when we go through dark valleys. Even when we go through death's dark veil.

We need fear no evil. When Jesus is our saviour. And so we pray for all those who are ill. All those who may be even approaching the end of life.

As we may think of some. We pray that you would be near to them at this time. We pray, Father, for those who are grieving. We're always conscious of those who are grieving.

And we bring them to you in prayer. We ask that they would know the comfort of God. And we thank you that you are the God who binds up the broken hearted. And we pray that that would be the experience of all who are grieving.

We pray for those who are going through difficult times. Those who may be dealing with difficult situations in work. Or in family. Or even in the church family. We are sinners.

[ 13 : 00 ] And Lord, we know that our sin causes all kinds of complexities in our lives. And so, Lord, we pray for any who may be troubled. Any who may be distracted.

Any who may have drifted a distance from you. And we ask, Lord, that you would be with them. That you would be with each one of us. Pray for those who are healthy. Those who are not in any particular material or physical need.

But who don't know Jesus. Or who may have everything that this world has to offer. But have not got salvation. And we pray that you would be moving in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this place and in this community. Across the island. Across these islands. Across our nation. Across all nations. We pray that this would be a day where many more people are awakened in their souls.

And are brought to faith and salvation. And through Jesus. We pray for your church. We pray for the church here. In the island. Across denominations.

[ 14 : 10 ]    Wherever Christ crucified is preached. We pray that you would prosper that work. That the gospel would advance. We pray for places that are struggling just now. With our vacancies. And we're conscious that there are many.

Around this area. And we ask, Lord, that you would draw people to these places. That you would call people to. To be your servants. To speak the gospel.

In these different areas. And we pray in a nation. Which is increasingly dark. That you would raise up people who would be salt. That would be light.

That would proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. Jesus said the harvest is plentiful. The workers are few. Pray. And so we pray, Lord. That you would call many into your work.

And that the gospel would advance. Hear our prayers. Lead us and guide us in worship. We pray. Take away our sin. Empty us of self. Fill us with the Holy Spirit.

[ 15 : 11 ]    Enable us to worship you in spirit. And in truth. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls. Would you like to come forward, please? How's everyone today?

Good. Good. Two things to show you today. Which I was struggling in my pocket for. What are these?

Do you know what are these on? Stones. Stones. And they're both stones.

And these two stones. It's not actually these exact stones. But stones that are very like these ones. That cause me a bit of bother in the sweep. And the first is a stone.

It was about this size. I'll tell you what happened. I was heading over last Sunday night. I think it was. To Scalpy. To do a wee visit over there.

[ 16 : 24 ]    And I was driving along in the wee car. Binsing along through Category. In that wee car. Pushing down hard. See what will go up that hill. And got to Scalpy. And had the visit.

Had a nice time there. And I was heading back. And I started hearing. Something from the car. It was like a. It was like a scraping noise.

It was like a. A screeching noise. And I'm saying to Mary. Are you hearing that? She's saying yeah I'm hearing that. Slow down. And it was like grinding noise. Sped up.

And it was like screeching. It was like a. It was like a. And do you know what it was? It was a. It was a. Michael yeah. It's a stone in the. Not. It's a exhaust.

We've got a mechanical mind here. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

[ 17 : 19 ]    No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

No. No. No. The car's still driving okay. It felt a wee bit juddery. But I thought, oh, it's okay. So I drove home and parked it up.

Then the next morning, off to school. There's a noise that was coming from the thing. And a few folks were kind of looking around and thinking, what on earth is that?

And then I drove around the village. There's a kind of noise that's coming. People were stopping. I drove past the bus parking. The bus drivers, DJ and the rest, were all standing there like they were doing.

[ 18 : 15 ]    And all turning around. What on earth is that thing? So they were hearing this stone. But I thought, I'll leave it for a while longer. And so I left it for a while longer.

And eventually, when I spoke to Donnie Martin, he said, you know what we're going to have to do? What do you think he's going to have to do? Take the wheel off. Take the wheel off. Exactly.

That's what he said. You have to take the wheel off and there'll be a stone in there and we'll have to take it out. And so, what I should have done is done that, shouldn't I? But I actually drove to Leverborough.

And between here and Leverborough, the stone fell out. But ever since then, I can still hear the discs kind of go, you know, grinding a bit. So, I think I've probably done a wee bit of damage to one of the discs and I'll have to replace it.

All because of this wee stone. You know, a big car. Well, not that. Not a very big car. But a car that's much bigger than a stone.

[ 19 : 14 ] Just a wee stone. And all that noise. All that juddering through the wheel. And probably a wee bit of damage. All from one wee stone.

What about this one? Do you think the stone this size? Do you think the stone this size can do damage? Where's the stone?

Here in. Yeah? How could it do damage? It got stuck somewhere. Guess where it got stuck.

Not on my phone. Not on your throat. Not on my throat, no. No. You wish. I'm just joking. That might stop me talking for as long as I'm sermons.

What do you think? It got stuck in my shoe. I hate that too. And so I was off out for a run.

[ 20 : 21 ] And I had a long run to do. I had to do 11 miles. And I went off on the Saturday morning. And as I was running along, I think it was probably even smaller than this stone.

I could feel it. Just a wee bit. And it was just on my heel. There. And I thought, I should stop. And I should take that stone out. But I was ready running.

And once I stopped, I never wanted to start again. And I just thought, I'll just carry on a bit longer. And mile two, I could still feel it. And mile three, and mile four, mile...

See, by mile 11, all I could think about was that stone in my shoe. And when I took my shoe off once I got home, and my heel was bruised, and it was a bit cut. All because of a tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny...

...he stone. What should I have done? Stopped. I should have stopped. When should I have stopped? Straight away. So with this wee stone, even though it was just wee, I should have stopped right away, shouldn't I?

[ 21 : 25 ] Finley. And I should have taken that out. And with this big stone, bigger stone, I should have stopped right away, shouldn't I? Probably taken the wheel off and taken it out.

Now, in our lives, put your hand up if you ever sinned. And sometimes when we sin, you know, we we say, well, it was just a wee sin.

And we might think, well, it was just a wee sin. Nobody saw it. Nobody else knows about it. Might be in my head. Might be in my heart. Might be something I took and nobody else saw it.

And you might think, oh, well, I'll just leave it. I'll pretend it's not there. But you know, boys and girls, even sins that we think are wee, do they do damage?

Do they do damage? Is there such a thing as a wee sin that doesn't matter? No. No. Because what did Jesus have to do to deal with our sin? He had to die.

[ 22 : 34 ] He had to go to the cross to take our sin away. So, when God works in our lives, when God the Holy Spirit works, do you know what he does? He shows us our sin.

He tells us about our sin. And the second we become aware of our sin, what should we do? Can we take our sin away?

When I could take my shoe off and I could have taken that stone out. Or I could have taken the wheel off and got rid of that stone. Can I take my sin away? So what do I need to do when I sin?

Even if it's one that nobody else noticed. Even if it's maybe just I'm wild. I'm wild with someone or I thought something wrong or I took something that I shouldn't have when I did.

I remember doing that when I was ten. I stole something. Nobody else saw. What do I do the moment that the Holy Spirit tells me about my sin? Pray.

[ 23 : 37 ] And what do I pray? Please, Jesus, will you take my sin away? And when we pray that, what does Jesus say he'll do?

He'll forgive us. That's right. He'll take our sin away, won't he? And he'll make our hearts clean. So, don't be like me believing things like this and your wheel and your shoe or sins in your heart.

When we become aware of our sin, let's immediately pray and every day pray and ask Jesus to take these things away. So let's pray now, will we?

Lord God, we thank you for your love of us and we thank you that you tell us that our hearts are sinful and we know that. We know that we think things that we shouldn't.

We know that we sometimes say things that we shouldn't. We know that sometimes we do things that we shouldn't and their sin. We pray that you would forgive us our sin even as we think just now about things that we might not have asked for forgiveness for.

[ 24 : 50 ] Things that we might be hiding away in our hearts. We pray that as we tell you about them in our hearts that you would forgive them and that you would make us clean. And we ask all this in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to sing now and we're going to sing about the reason that we can be clean. Here is love vast as the ocean loving kindness as the flood when the Prince of life our ransom shed for us His precious blood.

It's the blood of Jesus that makes our sins be taken from us. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Okay, boys and girls, if you head to Sunday school, remember to pray for them as they go.

Amen.

[ 27 : 31 ] Matthew chapter 6. And we'll read from verse 1.

Jesus says, 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, sign no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others.

Truly, I tell you, truly I say to you, they have received the 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.

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received the 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'll be heard for their many words.

[ 28 : 51 ] 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 have also forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

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 a 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.

[ 29 : 52 ] And so on. We'll look at the whole chapter, but we'll stop at that point now. May God bless that reading of his word to us. We'll sing again now to God's praise. We'll sing from Psalm 42, the first two verses of the Psalm.

Like as the hart for water brooks and thirst doth pant and bray, so pants my longing soul,  
O God, that come to thee I may. My soul for God, living God, doth thirst.

When shall I near unto thy countenance approach and in God's sight appear? These two verses we sing in Gaelic and we remain seated to sing to God's praise in Gaelic. NINGNING CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SNINGNINGNING Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 33 : 17 ] Thank you.

If you could turn back please with me to Matthew chapter 6. Amen. Amen. We'll pray as we come back to God's word.

again Father we thank you for your word and we thank you that in your word there is life there is food for our souls there is direction we are guided and we see who you are and we see also who we are and how much we are in need of you we pray that as we come to this passage as we consider the Sermon on the Mount that we would hear the voice of Jesus that we would see the person and the work of Jesus and that we would be drawn in faith to Jesus we thank you that your word says that when he is lifted up he draws all people to himself and so we pray that we would be drawn to Christ this morning we pray for the young ones as well as we do week by week that you would be working in their lives that you would help them to see and hear and understand that they would remember their creator in the days of their youth that they would trust the Lord Jesus in the days of their youth and all the days of their lives and we pray for those who meet elsewhere we think of Farrakhan in particular as he heads over to Scalpy just now that as he opens your word that he would know the help of the Holy Spirit and that we too would know the help of the Holy Spirit in this time now hear our prayers go before us we pray in Jesus name

Amen Most of us where we are here in in Harris we have a view of the sea in those in Scalp we have a view of the sea so day by day as you look out a window we can see the tidal movements we see that the tide it comes in and it fills the bay and then the tide goes out and we see the bay emptying the levels dropping and that happens day by day by day by day it has to happen it continues to happen and as you see that happen and as I see that happen it's a good picture for us to think about in terms of the Christian life if we open our Bibles and we have the Sermon on the Mount in front of us even if we step back a page to to Matthew chapter 5 we see the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5 through to Matthew 7 we have the Sermon of Jesus recorded God the Son preaches and we have a record of this in these chapters and in Matthew 5 to 7 Jesus is teaching us about the Christian life he's teaching us about how his disciples back then and how we his disciples today if we are trusting him how we are to live so how are we to live well we are to come to Jesus and to be with him to receive blessing from him and if you've got Matthew 5 open you can see that's where the Sermon on the Mount starts Jesus he calls his disciples to come in and to be with him and as they sit down with him and as he teaches them they receive blessing and then he sends them out and we have that phrase that we often say we are blessed in order to be a blessing so Jesus he calls the disciples in he blesses them he teaches them about the the blessed life and then he sends them out into the world and he teaches them about how they're to be salt and how they're to be light and he teaches them about how the righteousness something of the the flavor and the essence of Jesus should be seen and felt and heard and tasted in every part of our lives we have all these different sections

[ 38 : 09 ] Jesus teaches us about anger and lust and marriage and divorce and telling the truth and how we're to be with our enemies and not to retaliate but to show mercy and to show grace but we see that movement that's the point I'm trying to make just as we see the the tithe come in and then going out that the life of disciples as those who are disciples of Jesus is a life where we we come in to him we come in to be with him we take time to be with him we we're still in his presence so that he'll bless us and then he sends us out into the world we come in to worship and then we go out as witnesses for Jesus and in Matthew chapter 6 we see Jesus calling the disciples back in so Matthew 5 verses 1 to 11

Jesus he calls the disciples in he teaches them about the blessing that there is in his presence living close with him and then he sends them out to be sought and liked look at verses 13 through to the end of Matthew 5 and at the beginning of Matthew chapter 6 Jesus he's calling his disciples back in and he's teaching them about what it looks like to live close to God he's teaching them about the the key disciplines that are to be part of our lives if we are to live lives of worship if we are to live lives that are that are close to God there's various disciplines that I want to go through in the time that we have Jesus teaches us first of all about the discipline of giving and then there's the discipline of praying then there's the discipline of fasting then there's the discipline of serving and then there's the discipline of not worrying so that's the big picture and that's what we're trying to get a big picture of the sermon on the mount so first of all

Jesus he teaches his disciples about the discipline of giving and in verses 1 to 4 we have that emphasis beware of practicing your righteousness before other people says Jesus 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 the 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 so discipline number one for the Christian disciple in Matthew chapter 6 is giving which is an interesting place to begin I think we're probably quite uncomfortable asking people to give of their time and their talents and their money



I don't like having to ask people to give and I think if we were to draw up a sort of priority list of what disciplines should feature in the life of a disciple I think giving would be quite far down the list we wouldn't talk about giving early on in that conversation and yet Jesus doesn't hesitate to identify this as a discipline that must be developed in the life of the Christian we're to be givers three words that I want us to notice in this point and then in the subsequent two points when who and why so just to structure our thoughts in terms of this discipline first of all notice the word when Jesus doesn't say to the disciples back then and here today if you give he actually says when you give and he says it twice he says it in verse 2 and he says it in verse 3 so that we won't miss it it's a double emphasis this is a discipline he says when you give he expects he assumes that we will give but who are we giving to if we take the second word who are we giving to well we're to give to the needy and again

Jesus he says that twice he says it in verse 2 he says it in verse 3 we're to give to the needy so who are the needy well the needy are those who are materially poor those who don't have much those who are in physical need or in material need or in psychological need there are those who are needy we are aware of them we are them and we're to give to those who are in that kind of material this worldly need but the needy are not just those who are materially wanting the needy are also those who are spiritually poor the needy are those who may be healthy and who may be wealthy and who may lack nothing in terms of this world's stuff but they have no hope they don't know

[ 44 : 09 ] Jesus they're in the most desperate urgent need and we're to give to them and Jesus models for us a life where he gave to the needy all kinds of people came to Jesus who were in need people who were in physical need people who were in mental need people who were in spiritual need and they came to Jesus and he gave of himself he gave of his talents he even gave his life to those who were in need so when we give not if we give who do we give to we give to those who are in need materially and spiritually and why do we give we're not to give to be seen by people we're not to give in such a way that people notice and they give us a round of applause for all the good things we're doing we're not to give in order that we get a picture in some local paper that was what the

Pharisees were doing and Jesus calls them out on that he says Jesus says your giving should be as quiet as secretive as under the radar as possible only God should see what you are giving whether that's money whether that's time whether that's talents we don't draw attention to ourselves we give so that God the Father should see our giving is an act of worship of God so what can you and I give for Jesus sake it's a question that we should always be asking can I give more of my time to those who are in need in the work of the kingdom have I got talents that I could lay down before Jesus and ask him to use them in his work in the world have we got money have we got stuff that rather than locking it away we can give in such a way that people who are in need will be helped and God will be glorified so first of all there's the discipline of giving secondly there's the discipline of praying and that takes us from verse 5 down to the end of verse 15 and I want to just take these three words again and just apply them to this discipline

I'm not going to go into the Lord's prayer in any depth because I think it was about two years ago that we spent ten weeks in the Lord's prayer so I'm not going to try your patience in belaboring this I want to just briefly apply these three words to this discipline of prayer first of all notice the word when Jesus doesn't say if you pray he says when you pray there is an assumption that we will pray every Christian disciple will pray and Jesus doesn't say it once once he doesn't say it twice he says it three times verses five verses six verses seven when you pray when you pray when you pray it's maximum emphasis he turns the volume up to the top level and he says prayer is a discipline that will definitely be in the life of the

Christian when we pray second word who who are we praying to well we are praying to our father and Jesus criticism of the hypocrite as he identifies the hypocrite in this section was that the hypocrite was not praying to God we see this picture that Jesus paints for us the hypocrite and he's in the most public place he's standing on the street corner he's in the most public place the place where everyone can see him and he's using the most flowery religious language and he's heaping up what Jesus calls empty phrases and he's using many words Jesus says this is a public performance this isn't a prayer who was the hypocrite speaking to well he was speaking to the people who were gathered around to listen in he's not speaking to

God so Jesus says to us don't be like him go into your closet go into that secret place whatever it is close the door get all the distractions away and speak to your father it's not to say that we shouldn't be at prayer meetings we should be at prayer meetings there's a place for corporate prayer it's the most important thing that we can do in this congregation is pray together but as I read in one of the commentaries the person who doesn't pray in secret should not pray in public we pray in the secret place and we pray in the public place the emphasis here is in the secret place when you pray to Jesus who are we praying to we're praying to our father why do we pray well why do we breathe we need to or we die if we put our finger on our wrist or on our neck we can find a pulse it's one of the vital signs it's a sign of life and prayer is the pulse of the individual

[ 50 : 49 ] Christian and prayer is the pulse of the church Andrew Murray in his book the prayer life persevering in prayer says this prayer is indeed the very pulse of the spiritual life it is the great means of bringing to a pastor and the people the blessing and power of heaven persevering and believing prayer means strong and abundant spiritual life who are we well we are poor and needy people that's the reality and we come in prayer to our strong mighty loving gracious father and he wants us to come to him and we can ask him for help with all the things that we need help with and we can ask for his guiding hand in all these situations where we don't know which way to go we can ask him to reveal his will to us for our lives day by day as we acknowledge him we can ask him for forgiveness of our sin as we continually sin in prayer we can ask for our daily bread the things that we need we can ask for deliverance from evil when we know that we are under attack we can ask for saving grace we can ask God to save us to take our sin away to make us his children to make us

Christians as we pray and we can ask for sustaining grace that grace that we need day by day to help us to keep on keeping on so it's not so much a question of why we pray it's actually a question of why would we not pray if we are Christians why would we not pray why would we not be in a secret place on our knees why would we not be in the prayer meeting on a Wednesday night why not discipline of praying the discipline of giving and the third thing which connects with the discipline of praying and the question of perhaps why we don't pray is the discipline of fasting and that takes us from verse 16 through to verse 18 again let's apply these three words to this discipline first of all the word when notice again that Jesus he uses this word when and he uses it again twice double emphasis verses 16 and verse 17

Jesus says when you fast not if you fast but when you fast second word who for whom do we fast who do we fast for why why is it that we're fasting and the answer to that is and Jesus makes it very clear we don't fast for the sake of people we don't fast so that people will notice that we're fasting and Jesus again he identifies the hypocrite and there are some people who would fast and they would make a big show of how are you getting on with your fast oh well I'm at seven days oh that's pretty good but I'm at ten I'm feeling pretty grim I'm feeling pretty weak well not as weak as me when I fasted for 27 days there was competitions there was people who were sort of flexing their religious muscles by telling people how long they fasted and the people around them would say what a holy man he must be all that fasting that he does and Jesus says of such a religious man that man he's been looking for a reward and he's got his reward he's put his hand up he's told everybody about how serious he is about fasting everyone around has said what a holy man he is he's had his round of applause he's got his reward from people he'll get no reward from God the one we fast for is God our father when you fast who do we fast for we're fasting for God our father and the third question here is why do we fast why would we fast and the answer is we fast in order to make time to be with

God there's a bigger we could go into more depth and we could go different directions with this but the main emphasis here I think is that we are we are to fast in order to make time to be with God often the reason that we don't pray or the reason that we don't pray as much as we should and as much as we'd like to is because our lives are so full of all these other things and fasting is a way of cutting out some of these things at least for a period so that we can take time to be with God fasting is a way of taking some of these things that are a constant distraction and setting them aside for a period so that we can focus on God now we tend to think of fasting as food and it can be food but in our day as opposed to that day we spend much less time on eating on sitting down to eat as a family or as friends our time goes on other things so we might need to fast other things not food we might need to go on a phone fast how much time would that free up or maybe we need to go on a

TV or a Netflix or an Amazon Prime fast maybe we need to go on a social media fast and the time that we would have spent on these things we now spend with God in his word listening to what he has to say to us in prayer as we pour out our hearts to him the discipline of fasting maybe we should just ask the question of ourselves just now what is it that takes up so much of my time if somebody was to follow you around and watch how you and I spend our time where's it all going and where God is seeing he sees where our time is going so what is it that's taking up my time what is it that keeps me from being able to read the Bible what is it that keeps me from closing the door in the closet and taking time to pray what is it that keeps me away from the prayer meeting every Wednesday night there may be things that we need to fast in order to make time to be with

[ 59 : 03 ] God and to be with the people of God the discipline of fasting is the third thing the fourth thing here is the discipline of serving and we'll read from verse 19 to verse 24 Jesus 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 treasure 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 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 and then notice what Jesus says as he connects this and applies this 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 I think it was Bob Dylan who sang in the 70s you've got to serve somebody and that's the reality of our humanity we are always serving somebody we are wired to serve somebody and Jesus is saying in this section you serve what you treasure if you want to know who you're serving ask the question what do you treasure and Jesus says there are treasures on earth and there are treasures in heaven and Jesus is asking the question of the disciples back then and us here today what or who are you serving and let's remember here Jesus he's speaking to the disciples the ones he called to come close to him so he could teach them they weren't pagans they weren't unbelievers these were disciples

Christians and yet they have this struggle their struggle seems to be a struggle not to love this world's treasure they have a devotion to making money they have a tendency to gravitate to accumulate in material things and Jesus reminds them and he reminds us all these material things all this world's treasure will fade away and Jesus seems to know where we spend our money clothes precious metals like cars and he identifies these things he talks about clothes he talks about these metals and the reality is our designer clothes they're going to be eaten by moths they fade away they're not going to be there in 20 years time in 30 years time they're going to have decayed in the back of the wardrobe they're going to be in a skip somewhere and our golf

GTIs they will be eaten by rust and our money can be stolen and eventually we'll leave it behind so Jesus asks the question of his disciples why are you serving these things why are you allowing the darkness of loving these things to come into your life and get in the way of following me we're all serving something we're all serving someone and I guess we just need to look at how we spend our time and how we spend our money to figure out what we're serving and at the end of the day most of the things that we serve will not count for much in the light of eternity so how are we to live well our aim should be to live not for self not for this world's treasure but for

Jesus we're to live a life if we are disciples of Jesus we are to live a life of serving Jesus so that when we get to eternity we will hear Jesus saying to us well done good and faithful servant enter into the joy of your master it's challenging isn't it I have to live with this for longer than you have I have to live with this for five days in a week but it's challenging stuff isn't it and yet when we think about everything that Jesus is demanding think about how he how he lived he calls us to give what did he give he gave his life for us he's calling us to pray and as we see the life of

[ 64 : 39 ] Jesus he is continually in prayer he's continually withdrawing to be with his father the only place where we see a disruption in the intimacy between father and son is on the cross where Jesus cries out my God my God why have you forsaken me and the reason was you and I our sin and Jesus calls us to fast what did he give up he gave up everything he laid aside his majesty the older him said he laid aside his majesty gave up everything for me suffered at the hands of those he had created and he calls us to serve think about how he served go back to Isaiah remember the picture that we're given of the servant the suffering servant who was despised who was rejected who was killed for us remember what

Jesus said in John 13 he took up the towel and washed the feet of the disciples he said I came not to be served but to serve and lay down my life as a ransom for many see we're not preaching here that if we live to a high enough level in terms of our discipline we can be saved we are not saved by our discipline we are saved by Jesus we are saved by him fix your eyes on him but when our eyes are fixed on him we want to be disciplined we want to be praying we want to be giving we want to be making time fasting so that we can spend time with him we want to serve him and the final thing very briefly is the discipline of not worrying and you can see that in verses 25 to verse 34 but

I want to just highlight in this section the repetition of this word anxious verse 25 Jesus says therefore I tell you do not be anxious about your life verse 27 which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to the span of life verse 28 why are you anxious about clothing verse 31 do not be anxious saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear verse 34 do not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself so there's a discipline here that Jesus challenges us with and it's the discipline of of not worry as we finish the discipline of of not being anxious and I think there's a reason that this comes last and the reason is it's not possible to not worry if we neglect every discipline that has come before this you've seen the poster or the meme or whatever they're called the caption never in the history of calming down has anyone ever calmed down by being told to calm down and

I can see faces here that are acknowledging the truth of that we know this it's true when we are wild and someone comes to us and says hi just calm down it has the opposite effect we don't want to calm down we want to blow the stack and never in the history of worry has anyone stopped worrying by being told to stop worrying we can't just stop worrying we can't just switch off anxiety like a like a light switch because someone tells us don't be anxious the only way that we can stop worrying is by seeing that our God is bigger and stronger than anyone or anything that worries us the only way that we can manage anxiety is by seeing that our

God is able to handle every anxiety that we feel burdened by and that he loves us and that he promises that he will take care of us and we only come to know that as we take time to be with him as we gaze upon his glory we only come to know that the grandeur of God as we give him our time as we pray as we fast and cut some things out of our lives so that we're not distracted from him and as we serve him as we give ourselves to these disciplines that Jesus teaches us we get a bigger more glorious view of God and our worries and our anxieties they don't go away but slowly but surely they start to shrink because they're small in comparison with the grandeur and the glory of

[ 70 : 41 ] God so with the disciples of old let's finish with the words of the hymn that we'll sing turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim whether they're worries whether they're treasures they'll grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace we'll stand to sing just a moment to God's praise song o soul you weary and troubled no light in the darkness you see there's sight for a look at the Savior and life more abundant and free turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things on earth will grow strange treat him in light of his glory and grace through death into life everlasting!

He must and we follow him there! Hold us in the Lord of dominion for!

He will be more than conquerors beyond He will turn your eyes upon Jesus!

He will flow in his wonderful face and the things on earth will grow strangely dim!

[ 73 : 10 ] He will! He will! He will! word shall not fail you He promised Believe Him and all will be well!

Then go to a world that is dying! His perfect salvation to tell!

Turn your eyes on Jesus to flow in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forevermore Amen