

Fine Focus

Matthew 6:16-24

Intro

When I was in college, I couldn't really decide on what I wanted to do so I ended up changing majors a few times...

- I started off as a Marine Biology major — next I switched to regular Biology and then I finally ended up as a Wildlife & Fisheries Science major...

These majors required me to take *many* science classes and the labs that went with them...

- And in those 3-hr science labs, I spent a fair amount of time looking through a microscope...

Now, when you are trying to look at a specimen through a microscope, there are two main adjustment knobs — the ***coarse focus*** and the ***fine focus***...

- The ***coarse focus*** is “*the searcher*” — you use this adjustment to find the specimen on the slide and bring it into general view...

*Once you have found the specimen, you use the ***fine focus***...*

The ***fine focus*** is “*the clarifier*” — this adjustment is used to sharpen the image into fine detail so you can see the specifics of the specimen...

Now, I believe that the **coarse focus** and **fine focus** adjustments apply to what the Lord Jesus has been teaching in Matthew 6...

- You see, the *focus on the Father* is the **coarse focus** — it is the big picture — without the focus on the Father we are completely off-track — we are not seeing what we need to see...

And the **fine focus** is the detail that the Lord Jesus gives regarding **how** we are to focus on the Father — the specifics of what it looks like to *give* and to *pray* with a focus on the Father...

- And as we continue on in Matthew 6 this morning, the Lord Jesus will continue to adjust the **fine focus** and show us in detail what it looks like to focus on the Father in four overlapping areas...

So, with this in mind, would you please follow along as I read the passage that we will be studying this morning...

Matthew 6:16-24 (NKJV)

16 "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Let's move into our first section...

1) Fasting (vs 16-18)

16 "Moreover, when you fast,

Fasting was a normal part of believers lives in those days and I think it should have a place among believers of our day (if medically able)...

- *"Fasting is learning freedom from food so that we might learn that God is able to directly nourish us"...*

With this in mind would you please turn to back a couple of pages to...

Matthew 4:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

4 But He answered and said, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”

Now, we will never know if we are able to fast and be nourished by God Himself unless we try it...[expand]

Fasting that is focused on the Father is to be done with the intention of depending more fully on Him to sustain us...

Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV)

But those who wait on the LORD

Shall renew their strength;

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint.

Now, it is important to remember that fasting is a spiritual discipline — it is something that enables us to do other things — it is not an end in itself...

- [ex. running bleachers as part of training for football — the goal is not to be a great bleacher runner — the goal is to improve conditioning so that you might perform in the game...]

Fasting can also have important psychological benefits...

Because we may have an unhealthy dependence on food — we may be turning to *food* for comfort and support when the Father wants us to turn to *Him* for comfort and support...

Continuing on in Matthew 6:16 we read...

when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites,

Hypocrites are actors — people who are pretending to be something that they are not — people who pretend in order to get a desired response from others...

- [ex. social media influencers — pretending to be something that they are not so that they can make money off of those who watch them...]

The Lord Jesus continues...

do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting.

These hypocrites — these actors — wanted to make sure that everyone knew that they were fasting...

- So, they made sure that they were looking rough so that people knew that they were fasting — and therefore they would be sufficiently appreciated by those around them...

[ex. trying to appear sick so Mom won't make you go to school...]

So, the hypocrites are focused on men instead of focused on the Father — and in doing so they fulfill the saying “You hit what you aim for” ...

Notice what the Lord Jesus says next...

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

The hypocrites wanted to be seen by men and they accomplished that goal...

- Unfortunately, this focus on men is incredibly short-sighted — because if we do things to be rewarded by men, then that is the only reward that we will get...

We will get a passing compliment or a few applause and then it is over — and we are left as empty as when we started...

However, there is a better way...

17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

In other words, when you fast, take care of yourself like you normally do — don't neglect your hygiene routine...

18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place;

Once again we see the *focus on the Father...*

Fasting is not to be done so that men might see — it is done so that God might see...

No one but God needs to know about it...

and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

The fact that God sees our *giving*, our *praying* and our *fasting* is a great freedom...

- It frees us from trying to get the attention of people — we do not need to drop hints, post it on social media or blatantly tell others about it...

Our Father sees all things — nothing is hidden from His sight...

- He is aware of everything that we do — and whatever we do to honor Him in giving, praying and fasting *will be rewarded by Him...*

And this is a truth that we must take to heart — because sometimes it is going to feel like the things that we do for Him don't matter...

- It is going to feel like what we are doing is not making a difference — it is going to feel like things are not changing for the better — in fact, it will seem that things just keep getting worse...

And in the midst of those seasons we are going to be tempted to give up on seeking a reward from the Father and go ahead and get a reward from men...

In our weariness, we will get tired of waiting and so we will be tempted to shift our focus away from the Father and onto men...

But this is not the way — we must remind ourselves that God is working in our waiting and that He will reward us in His timing...

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NKJV)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Let's move now to our second section...

2) Treasures (vs 19-21)

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth,

This is a radical command that goes against our natural tendency to hoard things that we value...

*And I believe that the Lord Jesus is essentially commanding us not to be **pirates**...*

We are not to be those who scour this world for treasures so that we may lock them away for ourselves...

Because it just won't work in the long-run — the treasures that we store up cannot last...

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

Jesus commands us not to store up treasures on the earth *because we cannot keep those treasures* — those treasures are **temporary** at best...

- Moth destroys the clothes that we store up — rust destroys the metallic things that we hoard — and thieves break in and steal the rest...

And what moth, rust and thieves do not get to, we lose at death...

- [ex. search for buried pirate treasure — because the pirates couldn't take it with them when they died...]

The reality is that nothing that we store up for ourselves on this earth is ours to keep — sooner or later we will lose it all...

So, the Lord Jesus offers us a better way...

20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

Notice that the Lord Jesus *does not say that it is wrong to lay up treasures for yourself* — He simply wants us to lay up those treasures in the **correct location**...

Instead of being **pirates** — those who bury their treasure on this earth — he wants us to be **pilgrims** — those who store up treasures in heaven...

- You see, **pirates** believe that this world is all that there is — so they must get all that they can *here* and *now*...

But **pilgrims** realize that they are not home yet — and they realize that they *cannot take treasure with them* — but they can *send it ahead*...

- [ex. moving to Hawaii — can't take all your possessions on the plane but you can ship your possessions to Hawaii ahead of time...]

“Our life will soon be past — only what is done for Christ will last.”

You see, this life is all about investment for the future — we are to invest **in God** and **in others** and trust that those investments will return great dividends...

CS Lewis — *The Weight of Glory*

“Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

Continuing on in Matthew 6:20...

but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Heaven is the only safe place to store treasures because moths, rust and thieves are not found there...

- Heaven is the only place where investments are perfectly secure — every earthly investment will one day be lost to us — one way or another...

Only heavenly investments will last forever — only treasures stored in Heaven will remain secure...

But wait — there's more...

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Storing up treasures is *not only about the treasure itself* — as wonderful as that treasure will be...

- It is also about ***the person that we will become as we treasure the things that the Father treasures...***

*You see, it is an undeniable principle that we **focus on what we treasure...***

- [ex. person with many investments keeping up with the stock market / guy with a warehouse full of exotic cars will be thinking about those cars...]

Our hearts are always drawn to whatever we treasure...

So, if we want to have good hearts — hearts that are like God's heart — then we must treasure what He treasures...

And when it comes to focusing on what God treasures, perhaps there is no more helpful verse than...

Philippians 4:8 (NKJV)

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy— meditate on these things.

Let's move now into our third section...

3) Attention (vs 22-23)

22 "The lamp of the body is the eye.

Now, we know that a **lamp** is something that gives light to a room...

A good lamp will do its job and produce a light — a bad lamp will not do its job and fail to produce light...

The lamp of the body is the eye — in other words, what we let into our eyes will determine what sort of light we will have inside our souls...

If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

If we give our *attention* to what is good then we will have bodies full of light — we will be about the right things...

- Think about it this way — imagine your life as a house and your eyes (and your ears) are the doors of that house...

If you are wise, then you control access into your house — you do not let just anything come into your house...

- Instead, you decide what comes into your house — and if you believe it will be harmful, you keep it out...

This is exactly how we should treat our eyes and ears — we should be the ones to determine what we allow into our eyes and ears...

- If we only allow that which is good into our eyes and ears then we our souls will be filled with light...

Philippians 4:8 (NKJV)

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy— meditate on these things.

The Lord Jesus continues in vs...

23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

If we choose to allow darkness into our eyes and ears then we will fill our souls with darkness...

- We will continually ruin our inner lives through the evil that we let in...

And the choice is ours — God has given us mastery over what we allow into our eyes and ears — so we can choose if we will be filled with darkness or with light...

This brings us to our final section...

4) Masters (vs 24)

24 "No one can serve two masters;

Once again the Lord Jesus makes a strong and unmistakable statement...

- He is saying very clearly that **no one can serve two masters** — a choice must be made...

We must choose whom we will serve — no divided loyalties...

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.

Here the Lord Jesus is pointing out the reality that these two masters will not share the same servant...

- And at the same time, it would be impossible for the servant to faithfully serve both masters at the same time — it just wouldn't work...

You cannot serve God and mammon.

The Lord Jesus is pointing out the reality that no one can serve both **God** and **money**...

- And the reason why is that they each demand **all** of the servant's attention...

God demands all of our attention and money does the same...

So, we can either choose to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength or we can choose to love money with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength...

But we can't do both...

And this choice reminds me of the choice that Joshua offered to the Israelites in...

Joshua 24:14-15 (NKJV)

14 “Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Conclusion

As we close, we must understand that this is the choice that is being offered to us, every moment of every day...

- ***Will we focus on the Father or will we chase after another master?...***

The Lord Jesus has offered us a fine focus — we can see clearly that the best possible life is a life...

- ***In which fasting that is done for God alone...***
- ***It is the life of a pilgrim and not a pirate — a life of storing up treasures in Heaven and on the earth...***
- ***It is a life of controlling what comes into our eyes and ears so that we may be filled with light...***
- ***And it is a life of unreserved service to God and not to money...***

Let's pray...