

Monday Week 34 Teaching of Jesus (3)

Bible Reading: Matthew 6:1-18

Q. 133 When we pray, give, or fast, how are we to act?

A. We are to do these spiritual activities in secret.

A little girl was riding her bicycle when her father drove by in his car. He turned around to make sure she would get home safely. When she saw him, she sped toward home, but instead of watching in front of her, she glanced at her father in the car. In that short moment of looking away, she came upon a parked car and veered into it. Bang! She and her bike hit the parked car, and she dropped to the ground. Her father watched the whole thing. He stopped and ran to her. Though she was slightly bruised, she was otherwise unhurt. It would have been better if she would have kept her eyes on where she was going.

Getting our eyes off of what we are doing to see if someone is watching can cause problems. Especially in things like prayer, fasting and giving. We do those things not so people will see, but for God's glory. Some things are just between us and God.

Thinking Deeper

Some politicians are very concerned about what are called photo-ops. They want to be sure the media records any special event that makes them look good. Hopefully, that will transfer into higher positive ratings and ultimately more votes in the next election. Even though that may be acceptable among politicians, the motivation is often questionable. Did the politician really do what he did out of a benevolent spirit, or was it to have a good picture to promote his popularity? Would he have done the same thing if there was no camera or reporter present?

Giving to the needy, prayer and fasting are activities that should never be done to play to a camera, or to a reporter, or to a church board member, or to anyone else; except God. Those are private practices. The Lord sees and will reward acts of piety. But if those same acts are done with an eye to the approval of men, there are no rewards except what man can give. God will reward the faithful who have an eye only to Him. He sees. Worship Him by almsgiving, prayers and fasting.

Tuesday Week 34 Teaching of Jesus (3)

Bible Reading: Matthew 6:19-24

Q 134 Why should we lay up treasures in heaven?

A. Because thieves can't steal and rust can't harm there.

Jeffrey had been looking forward to getting a bicycle. He finally got a brand new one. It worked great, and he rode a lot with his buddies. But something started happening. The chain got rusty. The bike still worked, but some things didn't work as well as they used to. One day he rode his bike to school. Later, when he looked for his bicycle, it was gone. He looked all around the neighborhood to see where it might be. But it was no use. Someone had stolen his bike. Jeffrey experienced just what Jesus said happens on earth. Things get rusty and worn out, and sometimes they get stolen by thieves.

Jesus told us to lay up treasures in heaven. No thief will ever be in heaven. No one will ever take away those things that are there. Things don't get rusty or worn out in heaven, either. Heaven is a wonderful place that God has prepared for those who love Him. We can lay up treasure in heaven by doing things for God on earth. You can give money to God in offerings, or to poor people. You can also give of yourself. Give some of your time to God. He will use it and then you will have treasure in heaven. No one can take that away from you.

Thinking Deeper

Howard Hughes was one of the wealthiest men of his time. He was rich, famous and exciting. He had numerous contacts with movie stars and people in politics and industry. He manipulated his wealth to his own great advantage. It is reported that while Hughes was a relatively young man, he contracted syphilis. Later in life he became a recluse, and it is thought that he had a form of mental illness due to his sexually transmitted disease. For years he was careful to be hidden from the public eye, moving from place to place under cover, and not allowing the media to have any access to him. When he died, he had few people who were close to him, but one report says that 1,000 people laid claim to his wealth. As for Hughes, he didn't take one penny with him.

Solomon had an interesting, though depressing view of amassing wealth. "Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This *is* also vanity" (Pr. 2:18,19). In contrast, Jesus gave some more encouraging advice – lay up treasure in heaven. That way you'll reap the rewards yourself, and no one can take them from you.

Wednesday Week 34 Teaching of Jesus (3)

Bible Reading: Matthew 6:31-33

Q 135. What advantage is there in seeking God's Kingdom?

A. If we seek God's Kingdom first, He will supply our earthly needs.

Jenny was sitting on the floor of her log cabin home in Russia playing with her rag dolls when she overheard her mother talking. A cousin had come to their home with a problem. Jenny was too young to understand the problem, but she did understand her mother's advice to the cousin. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." Jenny remembered that verse as she grew older. She saw how God met her family's need time and time again. She came to strongly believe that God really did what He said He would do as their family put Him first. She saw it happen.

God watches how we live and then acts to help us as we obey Him. If we seek His kingdom first, God will supply our needs for food and clothing. It's a promise.

Thinking Deeper

Jenny's family lived in Soviet Russia under the iron fist of Joseph Stalin. Stalin implemented a five year plan to eliminate the name of God from Russia. To do that, he demanded that teachers teach their students that there is no God. Because Jenny's family believed in God, they prayed that God would help them even during Stalin's attack on faith. God helped them in a unique way. The government began to equalize all of the people, and to do that, they taxed anyone who made money. Jenny's father was eventually put out of business because of government imposed taxes and then fines for not paying the heavy taxes. When he could not pay, he became disenfranchised (unable to vote). The children were then thrown out of school, and the family was deemed a drain on Soviet society. When Jenny's father went to the authorities to ask for permission to leave Russia, they saw the file on the family and without a word issued the papers.

Not long after, Jenny's family landed on the shores of America, under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. They soon found jobs and had much more in the way of material things than they had ever dreamed of in Stalin's Russia. God was true to His word. They sought Him first, and He supplied their needs.

Thursday Week 34 Teaching of Jesus (3)

Bible Reading: Matthew 7:1-6

Q 136. Why are we not to judge others?

A. If we judge others, we will be judged just as strictly ourselves.

“Mother, she’s being a tattletale!” The girl glared at her sister. She couldn’t stand it when her sister told on her. Why couldn’t she just leave her alone? She wanted her mom to do something about it. She waited to see what her mother would do. But her mother just looked at her. “Didn’t you hear me, mom? She’s being a tattletale!” Her mother stopped what she was doing.

“I think there is more than one tattletale.” The mother looked from one girl to the other. “You just brought a tale to me about your sister’s tales. If you think being a tattletale is wrong, then you shouldn’t come to me telling on your sister, should you?”

The girl hung her head. Her mother was right. She had judged her sister, but found that she did the same thing. If her sister deserved a punishment, so did she.

Jesus told us not to judge others. If we do, we will be judged by how we judge others. God is the judge. Leave the judging to Him.

Thinking Deeper

“What happens to the heathen?” This question is often asked by skeptics who think that God would not be fair to judge the “innocent heathen” by the Bible if they have never been exposed to it. However, those who ask the question often do so out of ignorance of what the Bible actually says about those “innocent” heathen. In Romans 2, we learn that “when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”

If a man sees his neighbor stealing something, and says in his heart, “he shouldn’t do that” he has set up a law. If next week this same man steals something, he will be condemned, not by the Bible, but by the law of his own conscience. He has judged himself in his own heart and will accuse himself on the day of judgment. So much for “innocent heathen.”

Jesus said we will be judged by how we judge others. In Romans 2 Paul echoes that by saying the man is inexcusable who judges another, for he will be judged by that very judgment. God’s ways are just.

Friday Week 34 Teaching of Jesus (3)

Review the Week's Questions.

- Q. 133 When we pray, give, or fast, how are we to act?
A. We are to do these spiritual activities in secret.
- Q 134 Why should we lay up treasures in heaven?
A. Because thieves can't steal and rust can't harm there.
- Q 135. What advantage is there in seeking God's Kingdom?
A. If we seek God's Kingdom first, He will supply our earthly needs.
- Q 136. Why are we not to judge others?
A. If we judge others, we will be judged just as strictly ourselves.

Some men took a few boys on a fishing trip. After they fished, they had some food in their cabin. Then they sat down and talked about the Bible. "Do you think God knows what you are thinking?" asked one of the men. One of the boys didn't know much about the Bible or about God. "I hope not," he said. The men opened the Bible and showed him that God knows the very thoughts and intents of the heart. That boy learned that God is really there and He knows what is in our hearts.

Jesus taught us that the things that are spiritual are the most important things. It is more important to lay up treasures in heaven than on earth. It is more important to pray in secret than in the open. It is important to be careful how we think of others even in our hearts, because God judges our hearts. Jesus taught us to live like we really believe God is there.

Thinking Deeper

A Veterinarian who was a Christian talked to a lot of farmers who brought animals to him. Sometimes he would talk to them about God. One day he asked a man if he ever went to church. "I don't go to church," the man said, "because if I do, then I'll be responsible for what I hear."

"You already know too much," the vet answered. "You'll be responsible for what you could have known if you went."

Some people act as if God doesn't exist. They are called unbelievers. But even believers sometimes act as if God doesn't exist when they are too concerned about what others think, or are too interested in money, or they only think about their earthly lives.

Jesus taught us not only to say we believe in God, but also to act on our belief by relying on Him to intervene in our lives. Real faith means we really trust God.