

Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Lecture 9, Matthew 6:1-18

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Matthew. This is session 9, Matthew 7-8.

Matthew chapter six verses one through 18. Jesus talks about doing your deeds of righteousness only for God to see, not for others to see, not for others to honor you. And he gives the examples of charity, prayer, and fasting. And in the midst of the discussion of fasting, he includes what we call the Lord's Prayer.

Now this appears at a different place in Luke's gospel, but remember Matthew likes to arrange things topically. Of course, Jesus may have taught the prayer more than once in slightly different forms. But in any case, at this point, we have the Lord's Prayer.

And it has parallels, as we mentioned earlier, with the Kaddish. So, Jesus adapted the kind of prayer with which his disciples were already familiar. There were many good principles already by people who had immersed themselves in scripture and cared about the things of God.

And so many people offered the Kaddish regularly, and it began something like this, exalted and hallowed be his great name. May his kingdom come speedily and soon. The Our Father in heaven was very common in Jewish prayers, acknowledging God as the father of the Jewish people.

Sometimes in Greek literature also, it spoke of the chief God as the father of the world, the creator of the world. For Jesus, it's God is the father of his people. What does Our Father mean? Well, coming from different contexts, we may understand that somewhat differently.

It appears regularly in Jewish prayers, because in ancient Jewish culture, a father was usually someone you could count on, someone who would love you and provide for you, who would discipline you, but only in love. Well, some people today have different backgrounds. I mean, if somebody's been abused by their father or something, they may not think of Our Father as such a pleasant way of putting things.

So, it's important for us to remember what it's supposed to mean when we offer this prayer, to try to say, okay, this is the kind of father that it's talking about. It's an expression of dependence, just like he says before this prayer, that, you know, the pagans, they pray with all this verbiage, trying to make the gods do something to

manipulate them. But we don't have to do that, because Our Father knows what we have need before we ask him.

The same way in chapter seven, verses seven through 11. If you ask for something good, your father is not going to give you a stone or something bad. Your father wants to give you good things.

So, this is a prayer of dependence. It's a prayer of someone who becomes like a child, receives the kingdom like a child, somebody dependent on God. Jewish prayers often spoke of Our Father, but only rarely spoke of My Father, which is how Jesus often speaks.

Still, more rarely would they have used the expression Abba. You find that in Mark 14.36, and then you find that early Christians often follow Jesus' example in that, in Galatians 4, in Romans 8, the Spirit comes into our hearts, causing us to cry Abba, Father, because we are also children of God because of Jesus, God's son. And so some people have argued, well, that wasn't so rare, because we do have some examples of Jewish people referring to God as Abba.

But the examples we have are from centuries later. The examples all refer to the same occasion, a parable being told by a rabbi, and it's not a prayer, it's comparing God to an Abba, and it's always attributed to the same rabbi. So clearly it was a rare thing, the idea of addressing God in prayer as Abba.

Abba, you know, it's not just little children. Grown-ups could do that, but it was a title of respect, but it was also a title of intimacy, a title of great affection. And Jesus applies that to his relationship with his Father and has imparted that to us as well.

Now, of course, in the Lord's Prayer, it just says Father, as we have it in English, but we know that Jesus has also taught us a more intimate way, that when we speak of Father, it's a matter of intimacy. And that's one of the key characteristics we see of Jesus in the Gospels, is his intimacy with the Father, and sets an example for us of that, trusting God intimately. In Matthew, as opposed to Luke's version, in Matthew, you have two sets of petitions.

You have the you petitions, and you have the we petitions. Now, the you is very emphatic. You have, in Greek, the you or the your appears at the end of the phrase each time, and that repetition makes it very emphatic.

Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We seek first the kingdom, even in prayer, and trust that all these things will be added to us. When we pray, therefore, we need to make sure we're praying not just for things for ourselves, but we're praying also for God's larger agendas in the world.

God cares about the needs of the world. God cares about people who are suffering in different places. God cares about his honor going forth, because that's what people need most.

That's what can transform people's lives most, is to know the Lord. So, we're praying for those things to go forth. And ultimately, as in the Kaddish, we're praying for the coming of God's kingdom in its fullest way.

For us, the kingdom is already not yet, but we're still also praying for the future kingdom, the not yet part of the kingdom. The we petitions, some people have also said that those are future-oriented, but I think that usually, like other kinds of prayers in antiquity, these are probably more now-oriented for our present needs. We petitions give us bread, forgive our sins, and lead us not into testing, but deliver us.

But these are also corporate prayers, us. So, it's also a concern not just for ourselves, but for others as well. Nothing wrong with praying for yourself too, but I'm just trying to bring out the other emphases also that we have here.

What does it mean to hallow God's name? The prophets often talked about the sanctifying, consecrating, or hallowing of God's name in the end time. For example, in Ezekiel 36, the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you in their eyes. It's a prayer for the future, but it's also something that we should live consistently with now.

As in the Kaddish, it's for the future, but if you pray for that, then you also should live consistently with that value. I care about the hallowing of God's name. Well, then I want to live in a way that hallows God's name.

George Foot Moore, was referring primarily to rabbinic literature, but about a century ago, he spoke of the Kaddish Hashem, the hallowing of God's name, as the most fundamental principle of Jewish ethics. In fact, it was so important that God's name be hallowed and so atrocious for God's name to be profaned that some of the rabbis even said, if you just have to sin, you can't control yourself, disguise yourself as a Gentile and go to some place where nobody knows you and sin there, so you won't bring disgrace on God's name. Well, they weren't literally saying you should do that.

It was just a graphic way of saying, don't profane God's name no matter what. Make sure that God's name is hallowed. What does it mean for God's kingdom to come? Jewish people recognized as we said before, that God reigns in the present, but they also looked for his reign or his kingdom in a special sense.

When God would reign unchallenged, God would establish justice and peace universally and deliver his people from oppression. God often works now. We know that these are things God cares about, and so we want to work for these things now insofar as we can for justice and peace and meeting people's needs.

But we recognize that the kingdom is already not yet. We work for it now, but ultimately God himself will consummate it with the coming of the king. Implications? Well, we should also work for his will on earth now as it is in heaven.

And when we pray, we should pray for things as they are in heaven, that God will meet people's needs. This is a prayer meant not for people who are satisfied with this age. This is not meant for people who are like, oh, I have everything I want, I'm just satisfied.

This is a prayer that's meant for people who realize that the world is not right yet and we are looking for a coming world. And also, it has implications for the spreading of the gospel because in 24:14, the good news of the kingdom must reach all the nations before the end will come. And 2819 and 2820 talk about that as well.

There's a debate with regard to giving us this day our daily bread, especially for those who think that it's talking about a future promise. Is this talking about tomorrow's bread or today's bread? The particular wording is unfamiliar to us. We don't have that wording attested elsewhere.

Well, we need bread in the present. And so, it's probably not talking about the future eschatological manna, although that also is promised. But it's probably, you know, most people who prayed for bread in antiquity were praying, God, please supply my needs.

It's something like what you have in Proverbs 30 and verse 8, give me the needed amount of bread for today. What is our daily bread? Between 70 and 90% of people in the Mediterranean world, it's estimated, were rural peasants, many of them working on other people's estates, but some of them holding small bits of land themselves. They often prayed to deities because they knew they couldn't depend on themselves to bring rain, harvests, and the like.

When was Israel most dependent on God for daily bread? Obviously, when they were in the wilderness, they couldn't cultivate, they couldn't grow their own bread. And just as God provided for his people in the wilderness, we can trust that God will provide our daily bread now. There have been times in my life when I didn't always know where my next meal would be coming from.

But usually now, you know, I have access to a lot more food and some of the other petitions strike me more forcefully. But we still know that many of our brothers and

sisters need daily bread and we can be praying for all of us. And we always have to be dependent on him because we don't know what could happen.

Jesus in Matthew 4 depended on his heavenly Father for his bread and sets an example of that for us. We shouldn't be too self-satisfied to relate to this petition. When he talks about forgiving others' debts, may God forgive our debts as we forgive others who've sinned against us.

Peasants often had to borrow money to buy grain to plant their fields. Some Gentile moneylenders charged as much as 50% interest. Now that's an extreme example and a rare example.

But Gentile moneylenders often charged a great deal of interest. Jewish moneylenders weren't allowed to do that. They weren't supposed to charge interest to fellow Jews.

So, what happens, is you're lending money to someone who needs money to buy grain to sow their fields. What happens if they have a bad harvest and they can't repay? Or what happens when the seventh year, the Jubilee year approaches, when all the debts are to be forgiven? You don't get your money back. So, moneylenders, people who had enough money to be able to lend to others, stopped lending because it was economically not in their interest, so to speak.

That's one reason why when I go to conferences, unlike some other people, I don't take my books with me to sell them because I always sell them at cost, not making any profit. And then if somebody didn't pay me, I lost money. So, they found a way to get around that, though.

Jewish teachers said, ah, we have a way to get around that, called the possible. You give money to the temple. The temple lends money to the peasants.

The peasants have to repay the temple, and the temple will repay the moneylender. And so it was a way to get around the letter of the law, but it actually helped the spirit of the law, because this way at least people could get the money that they needed. Forgive us.

Again, verse 12. Forgive us our debts. Well, that was a common prayer the Jewish people prayed.

They recognized their need for forgiveness. They had a prayer called the Shemona Esrei, the 18 benedictions. This was the sixth of the 18 benedictions.

Forgive us. There it wasn't conditioned on forgiving others, but that concept was known. In the book of Sirach, in Sirach 28, forgive your neighbor the wrong that your neighbor has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.

Jesus goes on to say, to pray, lead us not into testing, but deliver us from the evil one. What does it mean, don't lead us into testing? Does it mean, God, please arrange for us never to be tested? Please arrange for us never to have hard times that test our faith. Well, you could pray that no harm in asking for that, but that's not very likely to happen.

Remember, Jesus went through testing in Matthew chapter 4, and he emerged triumphant, and set an example of that for us. But recall the whole context of Matthew's Gospel. 26:41, Jesus says to his disciples, have gone to sleep in Gethsemane.

Watch and pray, so that you will not fall into testing. Testing was already on its way up the hill. Testing was coming.

The point wasn't avoiding testing. The point was passing the test. And that's probably the point here.

That's the way this language was sometimes used in Jewish prayers. There's a Jewish evening prayer that uses a similar phrase in a similar way. And this Jewish evening prayer goes like this, lead not my foot into the power of sin, bring me not into the power of iniquity, and not into the power of temptation, and not into the power of anything shameful.

So, don't let us succumb to testing. Deliver us. And also, the part about delivering us from evil.

It's articulated in Greek. It doesn't necessarily mean that it means the evil one, but probably it's referring to the evil one. He's called that elsewhere in Matthew.

He's called it elsewhere in the New Testament. Don't let us succumb to the evil one's plans. God uses testing for our good.

The evil one intends it as a temptation for our bad. That's why he's called the tempter in Matthew 4 and verse 3, as well as being called the devil in Matthew 4 and verse 5, and Satan in chapter 4 and verse 10. It's an idea that in the West we often neglect, but in some parts of the world people are more cognizant of the supernatural, superhuman is actually a better way to put it, the superhuman and yet personal dimension of evil.

There are some forms of evil in the world that are so, so awful that it's hard to explain them without the existence of Satan. But as we've noted, there are three you petitions and three we petitions. Well, what about the ending of the prayer? As it's often prayed in many translations of the Bible, at least sometimes it's mentioned in a footnote, or often prayed in their churches, yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory.

Well, that's biblical language. I mean, you have language like that clearly in the Psalms, but it's missing in the earliest manuscripts of Matthew, probably not in Matthew's original text. Let me just say something here about what's called textual criticism, just in case you haven't gotten it elsewhere, although you probably have heard it elsewhere.

What we have with the New Testament, it's the best attested work from Mediterranean antiquity. We have a number of manuscripts of it. For Caesar's Gallic War, we have maybe 30 manuscripts.

For some very important historical works, we have only one manuscript from the ancient world, sometimes from 900 years later. The second best-attested work of Mediterranean antiquity, Homer's Iliad, has fewer than 700 copies available. But for monks in the Middle Ages, the big thing they liked to copy was the Bible.

So, you have lots of copies of the New Testament. And some of these copies go very early. I mean, we have a fragment of the Gospel of John from the early second century.

So, we're talking, maybe a generation, in that case, we're talking about things being copied. And sometimes these manuscripts, these early manuscripts kept being reused, even for a couple of centuries until they wore out. So, you have other manuscripts being copied, maybe even from some of the originals.

But over time, sometimes scribes would think, oh, somebody left this out, and they'd add it in, thinking it was supposed to have been there, and that the scribe before them made a mistake and left it out. Or sometimes a scribe would make a mistake and accidentally leave something out. I mean, you try copying everything by hand and see if you ever make any mistakes.

It's not a mistake in the Bible itself, it's a mistake in the copying of the Bible. Well, in this case, and part of it is because of the condition that the early church was in. I mean, it wasn't being copied in royal courts, like some other documents.

It was being copied often in conditions of persecution. In any case, in this prayer, yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, it was customary at the end of a

Jewish prayer to add a doxology of some sort. It was customary in early Christian prayers as well.

So naturally, when people prayed this in church, they would sometimes add something like this. Well, some of the scribes were from traditions where they added something like this and they got to the text in Matthew and they said, oh, that's not there. Somebody left it out.

And so, they added it in and that's how it came into our text. There's nothing wrong with praying it. I pray it, it's still biblical, but it's really not part of this original text of Matthew.

Probably it was added very early. The first-person plural, give us, forgive us, lead us, deliver us. Most public Jewish prayers were for the entire community.

Western culture and Western prayer are very individualistic. It's not bad. That's also an emphasis in some other parts of the Bible.

I mean, certainly, the spirit crying Abba in our hearts, we have a personal relationship with God, but it's also not enough. We also need to be ready to pray with one another as the body of Christ. Now, especially if you're in situations of persecution where they can't actually get out to be around other people very much.

But speaking of the norm, we need this reinforcement with other believers. We need to pray together because we're one community in Christ. Fasting in secret, 16 through 18.

Fasting often expressed grief or repentance, sometimes corporate repentance, grief over the community's sins. And this was also something that should be a matter of the heart. Joel 2:13, Rend your heart, not your garments.

Isaiah 58, The truth asks, the Lord requires. Work for justice, feed the hungry, and so on. Prayer, and fasting was often coupled with prayer.

It was not meant to be something ascetic in early Judaism where you just tried to make yourself feel badly or something. It was a sacrifice to God. One time in my life, when I had a serious need, I would pray and fast about it until I realized I had too many things to pray about.

For me to fast about all of them, I'd never eat. And so, I just started as a discipline. This was something I did for a number of years.

And I'm not saying you should do this, but I would just fast for one day every week. And it was not to fast for a particular need. It was just a devotion of my heart to God,

offering a willing sacrifice of my heart to God, and trusting that God hears my prayers because I'm his child, not because I'm fasting or doing this or that, but because he's my Father.

And it was a wonderful devotional experience during that time. But fasting is a way of sacrificially showing our love towards God. Some people can't do it if they're diabetic or something, and that's understandable.

There are other ways we can show our sacrifice to God as well. But people would use oil to clean and anoint their skin, or some cultures would use it to lubricate dry scalps. Most fasts back then included self-abasement, no washing, shaving, or intercourse.

But Jesus says, don't let people know that you're fasting. After he finishes this, he moves to another section. And this section challenges our materialism, and it really challenges our materialism to the core.

You have something like this in Luke 12, where somebody comes to Jesus and says, Jesus, make my brother divide the inheritance with me. Well, the brother was supposed to divide the inheritance. I mean, that was a matter of law.

And rabbis, that was one of the main things they were supposed to do. They were supposed to settle legal disputes by dealing with what the law says. Jesus, instead of settling the legal dispute, instead of saying, okay, well, I'm going to defend your legal right in that case, he says, don't be materialistic.

Don't care about these things. And maybe an element of hyperbole there, but the point is, Jesus and the kingdom are what matter most. We need to live for that, not for possessions.

Don't value possessions enough to seek them. Jesus is going to tell us here, and he's going to go on to say, don't value possessions enough to worry about them either. 6:19 through 24.

Some people praised wealth. Philosophers often viewed it as neutral or negative. Judaism viewed wealth as positive because, I mean, you can use it in positive ways.

John Wesley had talked about giving so much to the poor, and said, earn as much as you can. Give as much as you can. He didn't say spend as much as you can, so that may help oil the economy, but in terms of what we can do personally, it may not always be the most useful thing that we can do.

Sometimes we can invest it in economic development. We can invest it in helping people in other ways. But nothing wrong with earning wealth.

Judaism viewed that as positive, but they also viewed it as spiritually dangerous. Like in Deuteronomy 6, when you enter into the land, and you have all these gifts that God has given you in the land, don't forget God. Or Deuteronomy 32, when Jeshua and Griffith actually kicked, when Israel became prosperous, she forgot God.

Jewish texts spoke of the worthlessness of treasures of the present versus the true eternal treasures, treasures in heaven. Essenes went so far as to abandon private property. Jesus is equally radical, but not the way the Essenes were.

He doesn't set up a council to supervise and say, okay, well, you have to give up all these things. Rather, Jesus summons us to care about other people more than we care about our possessions. If we really do that, that's going to have a major effect on what we do with our resources.

But he's not saying possessions are bad, but he is saying the priority needs to be on people. 6:19-21, live like heavenly treasure is what matters. Often people would keep all their savings in a strong box in the home or beneath the floor.

Apparel also could be considered a form of wealth, depending on what kind of apparel it was. It was a resource that people had. Obedience on earth, especially charity, was thought to gain treasure in heaven.

That was a common Jewish understanding. So, people wouldn't necessarily have disagreed in principle with what Jesus is saying here. They may have disagreed as to how far Jesus pushed it because Jesus was being quite radical.

Materialism blinds us to God's perspective. 6:22-23. He talks about, literally says, let your eye be single. And that was often used to translate the Hebrew word perfect in the Old Testament.

But it also speaks of a single-minded devotion to God. He contrasts a single eye with a diseased eye or an evil eye. The single eye often meant, in Jewish idiom, it often meant a generous eye or a healthy eye.

And he contrasts this healthy eye with an evil eye, paneras. It could mean jealous or stingy or diseased. So let your eye be generous as you look upon people.

Don't let it be stingy like, oh no, I want to keep this for myself. He says you can't be both a lover of God and a lover of mammon. Mammon was a way that Jewish people sometimes, in using Aramaic, personified money.

Here, it's a term for money, but Jesus uses it and some other people use it as a personification. It's either God or mammon. You can't worship money.

You can't live for money. And the word earlier, I could have just used the translation generous, but I used the translation single, which is part of the literal meaning, because it carries over into this, the single versus double. So, when he talks about a servant can't serve two masters, you have to have one master.

You can't serve both God and mammon. There were a few jointly held slaves back then, but it didn't usually work out very well. Then Jesus goes on to say, don't value possessions enough to worry about them, 625 to 34.

God promises the basics. And the examples he gives here are basics, like food and clothing. So, it's not talking about becoming very wealthy and driving very expensive cars and so on.

God promises the basics, but he does promise the basics. He does want to supply us with the basics. Philosophers and rabbis often drew lessons from nature, and Jesus drew lessons from nature too.

I mean, this goes back to King Solomon. Part of his wisdom was about nature. So today we have the discipline of biology.

We learn a lot from biology, but we often don't draw ethical principles from biology. But ancient writers often would also learn things about God's way of working, as they looked at the world around them. The rabbis said that not a single bird would fall to the ground without God's decree.

And it may be a similar idea that Jesus refers to here. He knows every sparrow. He knows every lily.

He takes care of them. Why do you worry as if he's not going to take care of you? You're worth more than many sparrows. Cloaks were considered essential.

They were taken for granted in Exodus 22. Even John the Baptist, I mean, he had just one cloak, but he had something. Jesus challenges even this.

He says, don't depend on your cloak; depend on God, who's the one who supplies the clothing. And he's going to talk about that later in chapter 24.

You know, if your life is at stake, you may have to leave your outer garment behind, even though you need your outer garment, but your life matters more, and God cares about your life. Pagans, Jesus says, seek material things. Jewish people didn't like pagans that much, most Jewish people, especially in Judea and Galilee.

And so, Jesus says, pagans seek material things. You don't want to be like them, do you? 6.31 and 6.32. He's not prohibiting us from praying. I mean, he taught us to pray for our daily bread.

You can remember that back in chapter 6 and verse 11. But it's a matter of priorities. Remember, he taught us first to pray, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done.

And that's why he's going to go on to say, seek first the kingdom, and all these things will be added to you. He says, don't worry. Pagans seek after these things, but you don't need to be worried about these things, consumed by these things.

He says, worrying can't add a single cubit, which is normally a measurement of length, to your longevity. Probably a graphic way of getting people's attention, although cubit, sometimes the language could be used in different ways. Actually, Jewish people already understood, that it's in the book of Sirach, that worry can actually abbreviate your longevity instead of extending it.

Another sage, speaking later than Jesus, but perhaps referring to a familiar tradition among the sages, today's worries are enough for the day. You don't need to add tomorrow's worries to it. So, Jesus says, you have enough issues to deal with today.

Don't just start compounding worries and worrying about everything. Now, anxiety sometimes is caused biochemically. It's not always something we can help.

But worry is something that we do. And Jesus says, focus on God. Think about God's faithfulness.

Trust God instead of worrying. That was one of my growing edges years ago, more than now. But it's something we need to learn.

And he says, oh, you have little faith. Don't you know that God will provide for you? That was a Jewish expression. In Mark, often the disciples had little faith.

But you find this often in Matthew's Gospel. You have little faith. In Mark, sometimes they were faithless.

But in any case, Jesus goes on to say, don't judge. Judging assumes a divine prerogative. And there were others, other Jewish sages who held the same beliefs about judging.

Sirach, Hillel, and so on, were all said, don't judge others. There's even a Jewish maxim, just like the one Jesus uses here, as you measure, it will be measured back to you. Jesus says that one blinds oneself by rationalizing away guilt.

This is a grotesque image. It's like having a blind eye surgeon operating on your eyes. The Talmud uses a body of Jewish rabbinic traditions.

The Talmud has a similar statement. It complains of those who resent the mildest criticism. If somebody is told, take the chip out of your eye, he retorts, well, take the beam out of yours.

So, Jesus may be applying a familiar expression here. But it's really a grotesque image. When you read about in some ancient texts about eye surgeons, if they damage your eye while trying to operate on it, then their eye gets damaged.

Eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. I don't think I would have wanted to be an eye surgeon back then. But the image here is even more grotesque.

You've got this tree sticking out of your eye. Verse 6 is a bit more difficult, and commentators struggle with it. It's one thing what it might mean as an isolated saying, but how does it function in this context? Well, I'll give you my best guess at this.

This isn't necessarily correct, but it's the best I can figure out. I think it's a maxim, like what you have in Proverbs 23:8, where in Matthew 7:6 he says, don't cast your pearls before swine, or they will turn and rend you. Proverbs 23:9, don't speak in the hearing of a fool, who will only despise the wisdom of your words.

In context, it probably refers to correcting those who will not receive correction. Therefore, it's futile to try to correct them. And you have that in Proverbs 9:8 as well, the idea of giving correction to somebody who won't receive it.

One should discerningly continue to offer wisdom or the gift of the kingdom, like in Matthew 13, only to those willing to receive what one offers, just as God does. That's why you have them shaking the dust off their feet in Matthew 10. Don't force the truth in others against their will.

If they're not willing to listen, go on to somebody else. Maybe they'll listen later, you can come back. But if they're not listening, you can't force them to accept it.

More clearly, in chapter 7, verses 7-11, good gifts are guaranteed. God can supply anything to the righteous. 7, 7-10.

Now this is an extraordinary promise for prayer. It's like Elijah, who prayed for things and they happened. But here it's applied to all believers.

In ancient Judaism, normally when they talked about anything like this, it was attributed only to very special, holy people. But Jesus wants all of us as disciples to recognize that God is our Father, and that all of us can pray to the Father and trust Him. Well, the kinds of examples He gives for prayers here, you know, if you ask for bread, and Luke also, if you ask for an egg, these are basic staples.

Bread and fish, He mentions here. Most fathers couldn't provide more than this regularly, just the basics. God's fatherly care, however, is the assurance that He will answer.

Chapter 7 and verse 11. Jesus uses here what rabbis call the call of the Omer, a how much more argument. Jesus says, if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father, who is obviously not evil, give good gifts to those who ask Him?

And Luke zeroes in on a particularly good gift, the Holy Spirit. Matthew is speaking more generally. Chapter 7 and verse 12.

Do to others what you would want done to you. Well, this was a widespread principle of ancient ethics, even in cultures that weren't directly related in terms of ethics in China. I found a number of Confucian statements that are very similar to biblical ethics, although on gender there were maybe some problems.

But many statements of Confucius made sense. But it's a widespread principle of ancient ethics, do to others what you would want done to you. The positive form of it appears a number of times in Greek literature.

It appears in Herodotus, Socrates, Homer, and Seneca. The negative form appears widely, very often in Jewish literature, Tobit, Philo, and a saying attributed to Hillel. Also, you have in Hellenistic Jewish literature sometimes both forms of it, like in the letter of Aristeas.

Jesus says, do to others what you want done to you, and says that's the whole law and the prophets. He also says that in Matthew 22 regarding loving God and loving your neighbor. These were ways that would summarize.

If you do to your neighbor what you would want done to you, well, you're going to fulfill the principles of the law. And this actually was something that is also attributed to Hillel. Hillel lived before Jesus.

This is actually recorded a couple of centuries after Jesus. But since the rabbis went out of their way not to quote Jesus, probably this goes back. It's probably a more familiar idea.

So, the story goes this way, there was this Gentile who came to Shammai who was not as friendly as Hillel. Shammai was a different rabbi from the generation before Jesus' ministry, and Shammai was a carpenter. And he came to Shammai and he said, if you can teach me the whole Torah in the time it takes to stand on one foot, I will convert to Judaism.

Well, Rabbi Shammai didn't take very well to that. He took his carpenter's stick and beat the man away. Well, then the man comes to Hillel and says, if you can teach me the whole Torah while standing on one foot, I'll convert to Judaism.

So, Hillel says, okay, don't do to your neighbor what you don't want them to do to you. And that's the whole of the law, and the man converted to Judaism. Jesus also deals in Matthew 7 with present claims versus future judgment, 7.13-27. The way is narrower than Jesus' hearers think.

The image of two ways was common in ancient sources and very common in Judaism. One example of that is Yochanan ben Zekai. He was one of the leading rabbinic scholars of the first century.

When he was on his deathbed, he said, I see two ways before me, and I'm afraid because I don't know which way I'm going. Most of Jesus' contemporaries respected God. They respected the Torah.

It was part of their culture. And yet, some noted that most were lost. 4 Ezra 7-8 and some other sectarian perspectives, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, recognized that most people were lost.

And Jesus says the same thing. This is meant to grip our attention. Most people are lost, including many people who thought that they were keeping the Torah well enough and honoring God well enough.

Verses 15-23. True prophets should obey Jesus. Anybody can say they're speaking for God, but you need to live like you're serving God.

There were prophets of deliverance inside Jerusalem before its fall. And up until the temple was burned, they were there in the temple saying, God is going to protect the temple. God is going to protect the temple.

There were a few people speaking the truth. One of them was Joshua, Ben, and Ananiah, who was saying the temple is going to be destroyed. And Yeshua, Jesus, also said the temple is going to be destroyed.

But there were a lot of prophets who were just telling people what they wanted to hear and what the prophets themselves wanted as if that was the word of the Lord. Jesus says, here's how you'll test the prophets. Here's how you'll know them.

You'll know them by their fruits, not by their gifts. Thank God for his gifts. Matthew's audience, these were people who believed in prophecy.

They believed in prophets. I mean, Jesus was a prophet. But prophets have to be tested.

There's another early Christian work called the Didache, which is very early, probably early 2nd century. Some people have dated it even earlier. But the Didache talks about when prophets come to you, test them.

If they're in it for the money, they're false prophets. So inside the church, these false prophets would cost the lives of some disciples, verse 15. He speaks of it as wolves in sheep's clothing.

The enmity of lambs and wolves was proverbial, and predators coming in disguise were also familiar. You have the wolf in sheep's garb in Aesop's fables. So, the point is, they're dangerous.

They come looking like God's people, but really they're not speaking for God, and they're not living for God. The day of judgment. God will expose hearts on the day of judgment.

When they're saying, but haven't we prophesied in your name, and in your name done miracles, and in your name cast out demons? Sometimes it can actually be real, that God can work through people. Think of the book of Judges, where God was still working through Samson, even after he began sinning.

Eventually, it caught up with him. But there was a while where he was still sinning, and it was happening before he lost the gift and the power, which he got back after he repented, but at a very high price. And you can think of King Saul, who was originally anointed by God's Spirit.

He is prophesying. Well, later on, the Spirit of the Lord leaves him in chapter 16, and he's prophesying by whatever this ra'a ruach is, whether it's an evil spirit or spirit of judgment. I tend to think it's an evil spirit, but most of my Old Testament colleagues don't agree with me.

But in any case, and then later he comes into a place where the spirit of the Lord is so strong, he starts prophesying by the spirit of the Lord in 1 Samuel 19. Not because he's godly, but because there's so much godliness, so much of the strength of the

spirit in that place. Some people are able to do things for God because of other people's prayers, or because they're in a place where God wants to minister to people.

We shouldn't puff them up because of what they're doing, because we don't know people's hearts. Paul says that in 1 Corinthians 4, the day will be declared. And we don't know.

Sometimes a person can even be prophesying accurately, and they're not really living right. So, he says, you said this to you, but I never knew you. Well, that's a legal form for repudiation.

Something else that's interesting here, they're crying out, Lord, Lord, to Jesus on the day of judgment. Jesus is the judge on the day of judgment. Now, in some Jewish texts, that could be applied to a subordinate for God.

But normally in Jewish texts, God was portrayed as the judge on the day of judgment. Finally, in 24 through 27, Jesus concludes this sermon by comparing his own words to the Torah. Jesus is judged on the day of judgment, and people will be judged by how they built on his teaching.

There's a similar Tannaitic parable. When I say Tannaitic, that's an early rabbinic parable from the earlier stratum of rabbinic literature. A similar parable, where if you build upon the rock, you'll be preserved.

If you build on the sand, you'll be swept away in the judgment. But the rock in that parable refers to the Torah. But Jesus says, whoever builds on my words.

And so, he's taking over this parable about the Torah and applying it to his own words. Jesus' teaching is on the same level as the Torah. It's God's word.

The storm may refer to the final judgment, but also in daily life, sometimes we can be moved by these things. Jesus hears in verses 28 and 29, recognize his authority. When Jesus had finished, and that's how all the five major discourse sections in Matthew conclude.

When Jesus had finished these sayings, people recognized his authority. Scribes normally cited earlier scribes. Jesus didn't depend on anybody else.

He said, you've heard it said, a man, I say to you, almost like a thus says the Lord. He teaches with authority. Now, that language is already in Mark 1.22. Mark 1.27 speaks of a new teaching with authority.

Matthew leaves that out, because he wants to emphasize the continuity with the Torah. But, although Jesus is expounding the Torah, Jesus also speaks with great authority, more than the other teachers. Why? Because Jesus is one who's actually qualified to give the words of God, and not just try to explain them.

In Matthew chapters 8 and 9, we have examples of Jesus' miracles. There are 10 specified miracles. Two of them appear together in one story.

The synagogue leader's daughter and the woman with the flow of blood. So, you have 10 specified miracles, which some scholars think evokes Moses' 10 plagues, although they don't correspond exactly to those. In John's gospel, you have seven signs.

The first of them is turning water, not into blood, but into wine. And the last of them is not the death of the firstborn, but the raising of Lazarus. A little bit of correspondence in John with the first and the last, at least.

But, 10 specified miracles, but really nine miracle stories. They're grouped into three discipleship sections. So, you have a set of three miracles, teaching and discipleship, a set of three more miracles, teaching and discipleship, a set of three more miracles, teaching and discipleship.

Teaching from Jesus' miracles. Remember, over 30% of Mark's gospel involves miracles. One-fifth of the book of Acts involves miracles.

Much of Matthew, although Matthew has larger teaching blocks than Mark does. It's just too much material to neglect. And yet, at least in the West, people sometimes neglect these, or they try to spiritualize them only.

The context of Matthew chapters 8 and 9, between the first and second set of miracle stories, we learn Jesus' authority over people. Jesus has authority over sickness, storms, and spirits. So, why not surrender our own selves to his authority? The chapter after Matthew chapters 8 and 9, chapter 10, Jesus sends laborers into his harvest to preach God's reign and to demonstrate God's reign, the same way that Jesus has been doing in this gospel.

Demonstrating God's reign, demonstrating God's authority by healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing those with leprosy, driving out demons, and so forth. So, Jesus applies this as an example for his disciples. Well, basic hermeneutics, or basic interpretive procedure, don't allegorize true stories.

Don't turn them into just symbols. Miracle stories do have implications for spiritual restoration. They have a lot of implications for spiritual restoration.

But most of them explicitly speak of physical restoration. So, most Christians, I think, in the majority of the world, normally read these miracle stories not as just symbols, but they read them as this is what God was doing. And that's normally how they were read in antiquity.

I mean, if you think of, in pagan circles, if you went into a temple of Asclepius, and it has testimonies on the wall of different miracles that Asclepius did, what was the point of those miracles on the wall? So that somebody coming into the temple of Asclepius would say, Ah, Asclepius can give me a miracle too. When we read these stories about Jesus, they are telling us about the Lord who cares about us holistically, not just spiritually, but physically as well. Now again, the kingdom is already not yet.

We don't get all the physical blessings now. But that doesn't mean we don't pray for healing, especially in the course of sharing the gospel with people. I began to see this early on when I was reading the book of Acts as a very young Christian.

I saw that that was the main method of drawing attention to the gospel. There were public debate forums, but the main method, you look through the book of Acts, God did signs and wonders, and got people's attention for the gospel. So, I was working at some apartment complexes, and I was, you know, this one person there had something wrong.

I prayed for her. Nothing happened. Another person had something wrong.

In this case, it was her knee. She said, Oh, Craig, doctor can't do anything for my knee. It's just so bad.

So, I asked her if I could pray for it. She said, Sure. And a couple of days later she came back.

She said, Craig, you're great. Ever since you prayed for my knee, it's been better. Now I need to get you to pray for my lungs.

I've been coughing up blood, and my doctor thinks I have lung cancer. So I said, All right. On my lunch break, I'll come by and pray for your lungs.

But, you know, you really should give up smoking. It's not good for your lungs. She said, My doctor says that too.

But in any case, on my lunch break, I went by, and I said, Okay, now I'm going to pray for you that God will heal you. But whether God heals you or not, someday you're going to die, and you need to be ready to meet him. She prayed with me to accept Christ as her Lord and Savior, and then I prayed for her to be healed, and she was healed.

She had no more coughing up blood. The doctor said, Oh, you don't have lung cancer after all. And she lived on to an old age.

I used to say she was old already, but as my own age is getting up, I'm changing the definition of old. Anyway, so as we go on to look at these examples here, these are examples that invite us to have trust, and faith in the Lord who can do anything. He doesn't always do everything we ask.

But he hears us, he loves us, and he does answer prayer. One of these examples is Jesus' willingness to cleanse a leper, chapter 8, verses 1 through 4. This guy is in a desperate situation. He's socially marginalized.

He's a leper. It has physical ramifications for him, but it also has social ramifications. Leviticus 13, he's supposed to cry out, unclean, unclean, so that nobody touches him and contracts ritual impurity.

The man expresses perfect trust in Jesus' ability to heal him. He says, Lord, if you want to, you're able to do this. He recognizes Jesus' power, but he also has humility.

He recognizes that the choice belongs to Jesus. That's not a lack of faith, any more than it was a lack of faith when Daniel's three friends said, O king, God is able to deliver us, but even if he doesn't, we're not going to bow down to your image. Or in the book of Joshua, when Caleb says, well, this is the land that I'm supposed to take, and if God is with me, I'll take it.

He expected God was with him, but he also recognized God's sovereignty. He wasn't presuming upon God. I'm not saying we have to pray this when we pray.

Most people didn't say that when they came to Jesus. And one thing we shouldn't do is use this as just a cop-out. I remember one time praying with somebody who was desperate for healing.

And we can't guarantee that everybody gets healed, but we can stand with them in prayer. We can be faithful and care about it because this is something, I mean, this is life and death to him. And somebody else prayed, and he was really getting into it, the person who we were praying for, because it meant so much to him.

His life was at stake. And somebody else said, well, God, please heal him, if it's your will, and said it in just such a nonchalant way. We maybe can't guarantee that God will always do it, but we can stand with our brothers and sisters in prayer and care about them because this is something very deep on their hearts.

And often God does heal, as we know, although not always because if God always healed, all the first-century apostles would still be alive. I mean, Paul gets his head cut off, great, grows another one back. We all recognize that's not the way it works.

But we also see Jesus' character. I am willing. I do want you to be well.

Be cleansed. And Jesus touches the untouchable. This leper was unclean.

Touching him, according to Leviticus 13, Jesus becomes unclean. But Jesus touches the untouchable, embracing his uncleanness. And isn't that what Jesus has done for us? Even on the cross, Jesus embraced our sin.

Not sinning himself, but embraced our sin so that we could be set free. In the same way, he's willing to embrace these people's uncleanness to make them clean. He's embraced our brokenness to make us whole.

Also, he doesn't seek his own honor. There's a messianic secret, in a sense, that we may talk about at a different point. But Jesus doesn't want everybody to know he's the Messiah.

He's already got problems with crowd control. Too many crowds pressing in on him. He needs time away with the disciples.

So, he says, don't tell people what I've done. But we do need to honor the law of Moses. So also in verse 4, make sure you go and show yourself to the priest for testimony, as the law of Moses says.

Sometimes when I pray for somebody, I'll say, if God heals you, don't tell them who prayed for you. Because that's not what makes a difference. If God heals you, if I pray for you in the name of Jesus, it's the name of Jesus who healed you.

And you can go and testify what Jesus has done for you. Because he's really the one who heals you. There are many other examples here of Jesus healing, casting out spirits, and so on.

As we turn to the next session, we will look at those as well.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Matthew. This is session 9, Matthew 7-8.