

When You Fast

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Date: 25 August 2024

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 6.

We continue to go verse by verse through a portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Today we're Matthew 6 verses 16 through 18. Jesus, if you don't own a Bible, please take that Bible home with you today as a gift from our church to you and our hopes you'll continue to be reading the Word of God.

But if you're there, would you stand with me? So we honor the reading of God's Word together again in Matthew 6, verse 16 through 18. Jesus is preaching and here he says, 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 their 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. May God add a blessing to the reading of his Word. Would you please be seated? Americans love food.

[1 : 35] Amen. There is an entire television network about food. Preparing food.

Cooking food. Eating food. Social media is filled with pictures of food. And recipes for making food. We share pictures of the food that we're about to eat and post it on Facebook. Facebook. I wouldn't be surprised if on your way to church this morning, you talked about or you thought about what you were going to eat or where you were going to go to eat after church was over.

And I think more than any other Christian denomination, Southern Baptists are known for their love of food. I grew up Nazarene.

There's nothing. I grew up Nazarene. And we ate together, but not nearly as much as Southern Baptists eat together.

[2 : 41] And I'll tell you, when I became a Southern Baptist pastor, I gained a lot of weight. I appreciated the video last week for my seventh year anniversary here.

And the pictures reminded my kids of how chubby I was. And that afternoon at the dinner table, I got to hear about how fat my face used to be.

We enjoy food. Talking about food. Eating food. So I understand that you probably let out maybe an internal sigh this morning when you realize that our text this morning talks about fasting from food.

We'd rather talk about fast food than fasting from food. In the years I've preached, I don't recall ever preaching a sermon that was solely about fasting.

And I'd guess that if you've spent much time in the church, you probably haven't heard many sermons on fasting. It's not a topic that comes up much.

[3 : 57] Martin Lloyd-Jones said, This whole question of fasting has almost disappeared from our lives and even out of the field of our consideration. How often and to what extent have we thought about it?

What place does it occupy in our whole view of the Christian life and the discipline of the Christian life? I suggest that the truth is probably that we have very rarely thought of it at all.

I wonder whether we have ever fasted. I wonder whether it has ever occurred to us that we ought to be considering the question of fasting. The fact is that this whole subject seems to have dropped right out of our lives and right out of our Christian thinking.

Martin Lloyd-Jones lived in a different century in a different country. But I believe what he said to his church then is true for our church today.

Fasting is not a part of our lives. But Jesus talked about it. He preaches about it here in the Sermon on the Mount.

[5 : 02] And what Jesus says matters. Because he's the Son of God. And as such, his words matter more than anyone's words.

And in this portion of his sermon, he confronts us with a truth about fasting that we must consider and we must try to understand.

Because there is a truth here that he intends for us to apply to our lives. And the main idea that comes from our text this morning is this. The purpose of fasting is to focus your attention on God, not on yourself.

The purpose of fasting is to focus your attention on God, not on yourself. Now, if you're a believer here this morning, you might be thinking, I don't fast now.

Or I haven't fasted before. So this is not a problem for me. If I don't fast, then I can't be using it to draw attention to myself.

[6 : 08] And if that's what you're thinking, then what you need to remember is the underlining principle Jesus is using the illustration of fasting to communicate, which is practicing your righteousness to be seen and praised by others.

And that is an issue I believe that all Christians struggle with. The most common claim that we as Christians hear from unbelievers is that the church is full of hypocrites.

In some cases, those claims, I think, come from a misunderstanding of what Jesus meant by love your neighbor. But in other cases, the people making those claims have witnessed how unchristlike Christians can be and how often we appear to be someone in church on Sunday who is different than how we appear all the other days of the week.

If we desire to obey Jesus' command in this sermon to be the salt and the light of the earth, we must consistently evaluate ourselves and our motivations behind what we do for Jesus in His name. That's the underlying principle Jesus has been making at this point in His sermon, using giving and praying and now fasting as examples.

[7 : 47] And if you're serious about following Jesus, if you're sincere about making disciples, then you will care about what He has to say to you this morning in His Word.

Also, I think as we go through this text, you'll find that there's a lot here that the Holy Spirit will convict you of and hopefully change your mind about as He works through Jesus' words to make you more like Him.

If you're an unbeliever here this morning, we're glad that you're here. And maybe you're not a Christian and maybe you kind of nodded your head in agreement while I talked about how hypocritical Christians can be.

And maybe you've experienced that firsthand. And maybe that has convinced you that what we believe as Christians is as fake as the ways that we sometimes act.

Maybe you're here this morning because you feel forced to be here. I had a friend in college who was an unbeliever, but he would go to church with his parents every Sunday because they would take him out to eat afterwards.

[9 : 02] Maybe that's you. Or maybe you're here because despite the ways you've seen Christians act hypocritically, you know that something is missing in your life.

You know that something isn't right and you're looking for answers. And you now know that this sermon is about fasting.

And you don't see how this could apply to your life in any way. And maybe you wish you hadn't come now. Friend, God has brought you here this morning for a reason.

To hear this sermon. To hear the gospel. And I believe that you will likewise discover this morning a truth about yourself and about Jesus that you need to hear.

And again, I'm glad you're here. And I've been praying for you. The purpose of fasting is to focus your attention on God, not on yourself.

[10 : 20] And so Jesus gives three facts about fasting that when understood and applied to your life will increase your hunger for him.

The first fact that we see comes from the beginning of verses 16 and 17. Jesus assumes that we will fast. Jesus assumes that we will fast.

Look again at the beginning of verse 16 and then at the beginning of verse 17. Jesus says, And when you fast. And then in verse 17 he says, But when you fast. Jesus assumed his audience fasted.

And he assumes that those who follow him will fast too. If Jesus didn't want us to fast, he would have said so right here.

He would have said, Stop doing that. Stop fasting. But he didn't. So understand that Jesus assumes that at times we will fast. So then what are those times?

[11:20] And why should we fast during those times? A quick review of Scripture will give us answers. The only place. The only place.

The only place in the Bible where God commanded fasting is in Leviticus 23 verses 27 through 29. And that was on the day of atonement.

When the high priest would enter the presence of God and the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the lid of the Ark of the Covenant with the blood of the sacrifice which atoned for the sins of the people. And the nation of Israel during that time was focusing on God, their sin, their need for forgiveness. Their focus was on God who graciously forgives, not on themselves. Now, as Christians today, we don't need to fast on the day of atonement because the true day of atonement has already come.

[12:24] For us. When Jesus died on the cross, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. But while this command no longer applies to us, other examples of fasting in the Old Testament inform us, inform our understanding of times when we may fast.

One of those times when people fasted was when they were repentant of sin. They were so grieved and heartbroken over their sin that they fasted. King David fasted after his adultery with Bathsheba when that was exposed.

And he prayed that God would spare the life of the child that resulted from their union. And he fasted. King Ahab fasted when Elijah confronted his sin and warned him of God's judgment. The whole nation of Nineveh, the Ninevites, fasted after they heard Jonah's message of God's judgment. Ezra, when we go back there eventually, he fasted, we'll see, when he learned that some of the exiled Jews who had returned with him had taken Gentile wives.

One of the reasons why they were sent into exile in the first place. And that broke his heart. And he was sorrowful. And he was afraid of God's judgment. And so he fasted. And he prayed for his people.

[13:41] People also fasted when they faced overwhelming senses of danger. An overwhelming sense of danger. Jehoshaphat, King Jehoshaphat, proclaimed a national fast in Judah when threatened with attack from the Moabites and the Ammonites.

From a human standpoint, it looked like they didn't stand a chance. They couldn't possibly win. And so they fasted and they prayed as they sought God's help.

Queen Esther and her servants and all of the Jews in the capital city of Susa fasted for three days before she went to the king to expose Haman's scheme and to seek his favor and safety.

People also fasted to better focus on God as they desired to receive his word. Daniel fasted as he contemplated God's word in Jeremiah.

Moses fasted for 40 days on Mount Sinai when God reestablished his covenant with his people. In the New Testament, Jesus fasted 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness as he prepared to begin his public preaching ministry that would lead him to the cross and the fulfillment of his mission, which was to die for sinners and to save them from their sins.

[15:08] After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the church in Acts fasted as they set aside Paul and Barnabas for a missionary journey.

And Paul and Barnabas likewise fasted and prayed when they sought God's will in establishing elders to lead the churches that they had planted in Galatia.

And so taking all of this together, we learn that God's people fasted in the Old Testament before Christ and they fasted in the New Testament after Christ.

Though the reasons that prompted their fasting were different, they all shared an underlining theme. Fasting, fasting accompanied with prayer helped to eliminate distractions and focus your attention totally on God.

Jesus assumes that there will be times in your life, times when you are so convicted by your sin and so desperate for God's forgiveness that you will lose your appetite for everything else as you focus on Him.

[16:25] Jesus assumes that there will be times in your life when you are so overwhelmed with fear and with worry and stress and anxiety about today or tomorrow.

Times when your world seems to be falling apart. And he assumes that in those times you will be falling apart. And he assumes that in those times you will seek God to help Him sustain you and to remind you of the truth of who He is.

And in those times you will fast having lost your appetite for everything else. Jesus assumes that there will be times in your life when you are so desperate to understand His Word and so eager to clearly know His will for your life that you will lose your appetite for everything else as you fast to focus on Him.

I'm sure that you've faced times like that. You may be facing times like that today. Are you discouraged?

Are you afraid? Are you confused? Friend, you need God's help. And fasting may help you eliminate distractions, the distractions that are making you feel discouraged and beaten and broken and fearful and perplexed.

[17 : 58] As you concentrate on God and His truth, and His ability, His promise to keep you, to sustain you because He's saved you.

Fasting is not a way for you to draw attention to yourself. It's a means to draw your attention to God. When I was a youth pastor, I took some teens to Denver, Colorado for a mission trip.

And we, as one of the fun things that we decided to do, we went to this amusement park that was pretty sketchy. And we didn't realize it until we got there. But they had a mirror maze.

Have you guys ever been in a mirror maze? And it was a pretty tricky mirror maze. And so we were kind of laughing and joking as we got out. And everybody eventually got out but one student who couldn't find his way out.

And at first it was funny. And then it wasn't so funny after about five minutes of him not coming out and him screaming for help. And so what I decided to do is I sent one of our kind of mature leaders and said, hey, go back in.

[19 : 10] We're on the outside. Go back in about 10 feet. Don't go too far, but go in about 10 feet so he can see you and I'll just call out his name. And I said, you know, his name, let's just say it was Mark.

Mark, listen to my voice. I'm gonna keep calling your name. Don't look at the mirrors. Just come towards my voice. Mark, Mark, Mark, Mark. Eventually he got out.

Praise the Lord. He needed to hear my voice and eliminate any other distractions. That's what fasting helps us to do with God.

Eliminate distractions as we focus on him, as we seek his word to hear his voice. And we do so in prayer, looking not to ourselves for the help that we need, but looking to him for the help that only he can provide.

And so again, we see clearly here that Jesus assumes that there will be times in your life when you need to fast, because in doing so, it will increase your hunger for God as you lose your appetite for the things of this world.

[20 : 28] And so that's the first fact. Jesus assumes that there will be times when you will need to fast. Now the second fact, Jesus admonishes self-centered fasting.

Jesus admonishes, he warns against self-centered forms of fasting. Again, he assumes that we will fast, but he warns us here in verse 16 against a kind of fasting that seeks to draw attention to ourselves.

Let's look again at what he says. 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 their reward. By Jesus' time, fasting was misused by the scribes and the Pharisees, the religious teachers of Israel, because they had misinterpreted and they had misapplied Old Testament scriptures.

Instead of using fasting as a means to focus their attention on God, they used it as a means to draw attention to themselves. Like giving and praying, fasting became a hypocritical, religious show for them.

[21 : 45] In this time, in Jesus' time, Pharisees fasted twice a week. They fasted on Monday and they fasted on Thursday. And they said that the reason why they fasted on Monday and Thursday is because it was a Monday and a Thursday when Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments.

Now, it just so happened that Monday and Thursday were the major Jewish market days.

The busiest days of the Jewish market were on Monday and Thursday. The marketplace was like our Walmart. It's where you went to buy food, to buy supplies, to buy all different kinds of goods. And so farmers and merchants and shoppers from within the city and outside of the city would flood into the city marketplace on Monday and Thursday.

And for the Pharisees and the scribes, this provided a large audience for them to be able to showcase their religion.

[23 : 00] And they did this, Jesus said, by looking gloomy. By putting on a sad face. People do this in our day, don't they?

Acting sad. Because what they really want is attention because they want people to feel bad for them, to have sympathy for them, pretending to be a victim so that they can have power over others.

I mastered the art of looking gloomy when I was a kid. I was good at it. Some days I didn't want to go to school.

And so I looked sad before my mom. Oh, I feel so sick. Eventually, she saw past my phony facial expressions, but the nurse at my elementary school didn't.

She was ready to send me home until she called my mom. Michael's in the office. He's not feeling well. And so my mom smartened her up to my fake, phony, hypocritical, feel bad for me so I can get out of school ways.

[24 : 16] But I got smarter and in high school, for some reason, our high school nurse liked me. And there would be times in class where, you know, there was an assignment or something going on.

I was like, I don't think I feel too good right now. Or maybe I was just tired and like, you know, it'd feel good to go to the nurse's office and just lay down.

And so for whatever reason, she liked me and I'd come into her office and I'm just not feeling good. Oh, would you like to lay down? Yeah. Yeah, don't, no need to call mom.

I'll be okay. Just let me lay down for a little bit. Have you ever done that? You're chuckling, but some of you have.

Some of you students don't get any ideas. Moping around, looking sad, because you want people to notice you.

[25 : 15] The scribes and the Pharisees did that, but they took it to a whole nother level, a whole nother extreme. Jesus said, not only did they put on a sad face, but they disfigured their faces to draw extra attention to themselves.

The hypocrites Jesus is describing here would disfigure their faces by covering their faces with ashes. In the Old Testament, ashes symbolized ruin.

So to cover yourself, your face, with ashes, or to sit in a pile of ashes, was an Old Testament way to symbolize outwardly what you were truly feeling inwardly.

And remember that the word hypocrite comes from the Greek theater. It was used to describe an actor in a play who wore masks as they portrayed different characters and as they hid their true identity.

In this sense, ashes provided a literal mask for the hypocrites to wear as they played the role of a humble, repentant, religious person.

[26 : 30] But as Jesus points out, the audience they sought wasn't God but people. And so we ask, why would you do that?

That's dirty. That's gross. Why would people do that? Well, in religious, or in Jewish culture, it was very religious. And so the more religious someone appeared, the better people thought of you.

And so that's what they were after, to be highly esteemed in the eyes of their culture. And Matthew uses a play on words here that captures and drives home the point of Jesus' admonishment of this hypocritical motive for fasting.

In the Greek, the word for disfigure is aphanizusen. Aphanizusen. The Greek word for to be seen is phanosen.

Both of those two words share a common root word. A term Matthew uses, remember if you remember from last week, a term he uses, phano, to describe things that have a shiny appearance.

[27 : 42] So here's the idea. These hypocrites used ashes to hide their faces so that they could shine before other people.

they used ashes in the same way an actor uses makeup to look more like the part that they're trying to play.

And Jesus commands us here, do not be like them. Whether we give, pray, fast, or do anything for God that's associated with serving him or worshiping him, if we do it for the approval and the praise of people, God knows it, Jesus says, and God will not reward it.

And the Jewish people should have known this. Look with me at Isaiah 58. In Isaiah 58, God is rebuking Israel for their hypocrisy and using fasting inappropriately.

So they're saying to him here, why have we fasted, God, and you seen it not? Why have we humbled ourselves and you take no knowledge of it?

[29 : 00] Behold, in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure, God says, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist.

Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice be heard on high. Is such the fast that I chose a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?

Will you call this a fast and a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I chose to lose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house when you see the naked to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn and your healing shall spring up speedily your righteousness shall go before you the glory of the Lord shall be your rear God.

The people complained that God was not recognizing their fast, their fasting. They were indignant that God wasn't pleased with their ritual performance, but they had forgotten then, as the hypocrites in Jesus' time had forgotten, that God knows everything, and God sees all things, and he knows the true motivations behind our every action.

[30 : 35] He sees behind the masks that we wear. He knows your heart. I could trick my nurses with my gloomy face to get what I wanted, but my mom knew me too well.

God knows all things. He knows when you're faking it, and he knows when you're being sincere. Psalm 139, 1-3 talks about this.

Oh, Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. God knows your heart. He knows your true motivation.

He knows when you're faking it and when you're sincere. So, how does this principle about hypocritical forms of fasting apply to us?

[31 : 43] Well, let's talk about Lent. Not Lent, like pocket Lent, but Lent, L-E-N-T. Lent is a period of fasting and self-denial between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday, 40 days.

Catholics observe Lent, as do many Protestant denominations. And again, I grew up Nazarene.

And as a teenager, in my youth group, we were encouraged to observe Lent by giving up something that we enjoyed and to practice self-denial, which is not a bad thing at all.

However, as each student in my youth group, we went around the room and our youth pastor asked, what are you giving up? With each student, it was like the bar was raised.

And there was oohs and there were ahs. Remember, one student said, I'm going to stop watching this TV show. Ooh, ah.

And then towards the end, one student said, I'm not going to watch TV at all. Ooh, ah. Thankfully for me, I was somewhere in the middle.

[32 : 59] people. And so I said, I'm going to give up drinking pop or soda, whatever you call it. I'm going to give up drinking pop. I loved pop. I drink pop like water.

It was good for me to give up drinking pop. And I felt good whenever I told my youth pastor, I told my parents, and every week they check, how are you doing with fasting from pop?

I haven't had any pop. Good job. Keep it going. I gave up drinking pop, but giving up drinking pop did nothing spiritually for me that I remember.

I didn't pray more. I didn't read the Bible more, but I knew that if I didn't say anything, I would look pretty selfish and spiritually immature.

I had to say something, and once I said that, I had to keep going with it, because it did feel good to have people praise me for my sacrifice, giving up drinking pop.

[34 : 01] Sometimes we look at other Christians practicing Lent, and we can be impressed by their devotion. We can look at other religions, like Islam and Ramadan, and we can be impressed, at least, with their devotion to stick to that, though they fast because they think they have to for salvation.

But God is not impressed with any of those things, and certainly he doesn't command us to participate in Lent, and certainly fasting does nothing for us when it comes to our salvation. Jesus is the one who saves us, not our works. It's faith in Christ that saves. But if a Christian wants to participate in Lent, they are free to do so.

They're free to do so. You're free to do so, but you should do it, only should you do it, if your motivation is to focus more on God.

And really, really, that should be our motivation 365 days out of the year, not just 40. I worked in a warehouse in college, and my boss was gruff.

[35 : 13] He cursed and he cussed all the time. And he was easily irritated. He had a very short fuse. And when somebody messed up at work, or if a truck driver was late making a delivery or picking something up, he would go into a tirade.

And it was scary. He just cleared out of the way. But one day, I remember, he came into work with the cross and ashes marked on his forehead.

And I was shocked. Because I never would have associated Christ. I never would have associated Christianity with him. And you know what? He was really nice. And he was very pleasant that day. But the next day, once the ashes were gone, he was back to acting like his true self. Being a Christian is a way of life as a result of a transformation, a transformed life.

It's not a mask that we can wear at certain times of the year or certain days of the week. No wonder people think we're hypocrites.

[36 : 25] Here's another way this truth can apply to our lives. Our culture is obsessed with food and physical appearance. Intermittent fasting to lose weight is not the same as fasting to focus your attention on God.

It might be good for you and your health physically, but it's not the same as fasting to focus on God. Fasting for sports to make weight is not the same as fasting to focus on God.

Fasting to fit into a dress is not the same as fasting to focus on God. Fasting before a surgery, though I'm sure you'll be praying before that surgery, is probably not a way or not the same as fasting to focus on God.

Fasting for the sake of appearance for people's attention is not the same as fasting to focus on God. Some of these things, again, may benefit you physically, but not spiritually, if your motivation is solely on your physical appearance.

Ladies, especially you young ladies, our culture puts a lot of pressure on you to look a certain way.

[37 : 50] Our culture has deceived you into thinking that you must look a certain way, appear a certain way, and the pressure that they're putting on you is unhealthy for you.

God wants you to know that your identity is not in how you look, it's not in what you eat or what you don't eat, and so don't you listen to anyone.

Don't you listen to anyone who bases their love for you on how you look, who bases their acceptance of you on how you look.

They don't really love you. In a lot of ways, the Apostle Paul's appearance did not inspire people's praise, but he didn't need their praise because he knew that his true identity was in Christ.

In Galatians 2.20, he writes about that. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me in the life I now live in the flesh.

[39 : 06] I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Paul says, I'm a Christian. I'm in Christ, and it's him and him alone whose opinion I care about, and I know he loves me so much that he gave himself for me.

I don't need people's approval. This is a truth that all of us must never forget. If Jesus has saved you, if you're in Christ, then who cares what anybody else thinks about you or says about you?

They don't matter. And Jesus didn't care. Jesus didn't care what people said about him or thought about him, and he didn't care what they thought about him not fasting or his disciples not fasting.

In Matthew 9.14-17, it says, then the disciples of John the Baptist came to him, saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?

And Jesus said to them, can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom, and he's speaking of himself here, is taken away, and from them, and then they will fast.

[40 : 19] Excuse me. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins.

If it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.

Who cares what other people think? We don't need rituals. We don't need old traditional rituals to make us feel like we're loved, or make us feel like we're saved, or for God to approve us.

If Jesus has saved you, you're his, your identity is in him, and that's all that matters. We're not commanded to fast, but again, there may be times when fasting will help us eliminate distractions and focus on God.

Fasting is not something you use to draw attention to yourself, but to focus your attention on God, on Jesus, who fulfilled the law, who died to atone for our sins, who was raised and who lives, and who has saved us from our sins.

[41 : 25] is your identity in Christ. And if so, then you have nothing to prove or to show anyone else.

You live for Jesus, you follow Jesus, you let your light shine. Now the third fact about fasting.

Jesus advises us to fast in secret. He advises us to fast in secret. So he assumes we'll do it. He admonishes us. He warns us against ways not to fast. And here he advises us to fast in secret.

Verses 17 through 18. He says, 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.

Jesus' point is, again, that when those times come, when you face those situations where you are prompted too fast, you should do nothing to attract attention to yourself.

[42 : 32] Anointing your head with oil back then was like shampooing your hair today. Jesus is saying, wash your hair, wash your face. Don't assume a victim's mentality, but focus your attention on God and his truth and the victory that you have in Jesus.

Fasting is a tool. Jesus says, it's a tool that can help at times when needed. When you sense a need to concentrate all of yourself, all of your attention on God, understanding your need for him.

At the very beginning of this sermon, in Matthew 5, 6, Jesus said, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Let me read it again. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and see this part, for they shall be satisfied. satisfied. What do you seek to fill you?

If you hunger for people's approval, you'll get that reward, and it's not worth much. It'll only last for a short time. It won't satisfy you. You'll always feel the need to perform.

[43 : 55] You'll always be wearing a mask which hides who you truly are. If you fill yourself with the truth of Jesus, you will be satisfied.

If you seek him, he will fill you with the truth that you are saved, that you are loved, that you are forgiven, that your life has purpose and meaning, and that you are his.

John 6, 35-37 is one of my favorite passages in the Bible. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and I love this part. And whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.

[45 : 14] the gospel is the wonderful news that when God shows you your need and reveals to you all these masks that you like to wear, thinking that this is who you truly are, and he exposes your sin, he exposes your need for him.

And he turns your eyes to the Savior that you need, who is Jesus Christ. And as Jesus says, you don't have to go on some kind of journey first.

You don't have to fast for 40 days and 40 nights first for him to even have an audience with you. No, it's you realizing I'm a sinner, I need a Savior, there's something wrong with me, and I realize that there is something missing.

And you realizing that that thing that's missing is the person of Jesus Christ. And it's you turning to him and you asking him to save you, and what will Jesus do?

I don't know. I don't know. There's got to be some kind of probation period here. No, whoever comes to me, he says, I will never cast out.

[46 : 35] Friend, if you're here this morning, you've heard the gospel, come to Jesus, admit your sin, and you will be saved by him. He will never cast you out.

During our time of invitation, I invite you to come forward because I would love to hear about what God is doing in your life and pray for you. So how, believers, how should we all adjust to what we've heard?

I think it's this. Hunger for God's righteousness do not, and not, excuse me, people's approval. Here's how we adjust. Hunger for God's righteousness, not people's approval.

Question your motivations. Why are you here? Why are you here? Why are you listening to this sermon? Why are you doing the things that you're doing in the church?

Why are you praying? Why are you giving? Why are you visiting the sick? Why are you trying to share the gospel? Why are you sharing the gospel? Why do you sacrifice your time to do these things?

[47 : 46] We live in a day, even more so than I think in days in the past, where many churches have become nothing more than clubs, where people gather to satisfy a craving for community, and because it's a place where they can go to seek people's approval and be a place where they can impress other people.

Are you serving? And are you worshiping God to convince people that you are righteous? God will use us.

He will use you in big ways, great ways. If your motivation is true, if your motivation is not to be seen by others, but that others would see Jesus in you and through you, are you truly following Jesus?

Or are you wearing a mask? Today, I encourage you likewise during our invitation, if you've been convicted of that and you just need to pray right now, you can do that in your pew, you can do it up here, you can come find me and I would love to pray for you.

Don't be a hypocrite. Follow Jesus. He will satisfy you in deeper and greater ways than anyone or anything can. Let's pray. Lord, we love to eat.

[49 : 19] And God, we love to eat so much that at times we read passages in your word, we read this portion of your sermon where we talk about fasting and we think that this must apply to somebody else or it applies to a different period, a different time and a different age.

But Lord, as we've seen today, that's not the case. God, there are times in our lives where fasting is something that could help us focus our attention on you.

And God, you know each person here, each person listening to my voice right now, Lord, you know intimately. You know us better than we know ourselves. God, you know what each one of us is going through.

And if it's, if fasting is something, Lord, that they can do that will help them eliminate distractions in their lives to focus on you, then Lord, I pray that they would be convicted to do that now. But God, we certainly in this life that's fallen will encounter times where we feel anxious and afraid.

There will be times when we just can't, we just need to focus on you and your word and to discern your will for our lives when it comes to specific things. And so, Lord, I pray in those times, Holy Spirit, that you would call to our attention what we've heard in your word this morning and that we will use fasting as a tool to focus on you.

[50 : 41] But in all things, Lord, I pray that our motivation would be right in whatever we do and whatever we say and however we work, whenever, whatever it, as it comes to our church and the things that we do here, Lord, that all of our motivation would be to glorify you and not ourselves.

And God, that in doing so, we pray that you would be pleased. And we pray that you would be at work to do things that only you, Lord, are able to do. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.