

# MATTHEW

## Chapter 6

### *Giving to the Needy*

**“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup>“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. <sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

**6:1-4** Jesus’ teaching with authority now moves from the true meaning of selected aspects of God’s Torah (5:21–48) to a different topic, namely, the motives with which his disciples engage in deeds of piety that were regarded as typical in Palestine in the first century AD. Structurally, I have labeled 6:1–18 as “Life under the Father’s Care: On Piety.” Like two earlier triads (5:21–32 and 5:33–48), this section too contains a triad of topics: alms (6:1–4), prayer (6:5–15), and fasting (6:16–18). (CC)

**6:1 BE CAREFUL – προσέχετε**—This second major section (6:1–7:6) of the main body of the Sermon on the Mount (5:17–7:12) contains a remarkable alternation of eight present imperatives and twenty-four aorist stem imperatives. Though commentators offer opinions about the significance of one or another of the forms in this section, it is difficult to account for the entire pattern. Moule notes the general rule that present imperatives denote “*continued or habitual action*,” whereas aorist imperatives denote a specific action. His follow-up comment is instructive: “But this is an extremely fluid rule, and often the tense appears to be determined more by the meaning of the verb or by some obscure habit than by the ‘rules’ of *Aktionsart* [‘kind of action’].” While some of the verbs involved do seem to prefer the present stem in NT usage (προσέχω, προσεύχομαι, θησαυρίζω, μεριμνάω, ζητέω), others clearly do not (γίνομαι, κρίνω). (CC)

I suggest the following explanation for the movement between present stem and aorist stem imperational forms. Most of the present imperatives (along with the negated future indicative ἔσσεσθε, “*you shall not be* like the hypocrites,” 6:5) mark the *beginning* of important new topics or new developments. Thus the present imperative προσέχετε, “Pay attention” (6:1), is a general heading and also serves to introduce the topic of almsgiving. The present imperative προσεύχεσθε, “Pray” (6:9), obviously begins the Our Father. The present stem exhortation μὴ γίνεσθε, “Do not be like ...” (6:16), signals the new unit on fasting. Jesus’ paired present commands μὴ θησαυρίζετε ... θησαυρίζετε, “Do not treasure ... treasure” (6:19–

20), initiate the discussion on possessions. His present command *μὴ μεριμνᾶτε*, “Do not worry” (6:25), begins the invitation to be free from worry, and the present invitation *ζητεῖτε*, “Seek” (6:33), is the positive imperative paired with the present prohibition *μὴ μεριμνᾶτε*, “Do not worry,” in 6:25. Finally, the present imperative *μὴ κρίνετε*, “Do not judge” (7:1), begins a new subunit, “On People.” If there is any validity in this suggestion, then the present imperatives offer additional help in discerning the structure of 6:1–7:6. (CC)

*acts of righteousness.* This verse introduces the discussion of three acts of righteousness: (1) giving (vv. 2–4), (2) praying (vv. 5–15) and (3) fasting (vv. 16–18). (CSB)

Three important acts of Jewish piety were giving to the needy, praying, and fasting. Jesus warned His disciples not to do these righteous acts with the wrong intentions. (TLSB)

*μὴ ποιεῖν*—The infinitive expresses the purpose of the preceding imperative *προσέχετε*. The phrase *ποιεῖν (τὴν) δικαιοσύνην* (“to do righteousness”) is a common biblical and Jewish expression for the good works of believers. The phrase also occurs in combinations with other objects, such as “do righteousness and justice” (translating *טפֿשׁמיִהקִדְצִהשׁפֿ*, e.g., LXX Gen 18:19; 2 Sam 8:15; Is 56:1; Jer 22:3; Ezek 18:5; 33:14). (CC)

BEFORE MEN – Here Jesus warns his disciples to avoid lives of piety (“your righteousness”) that are lived out with the hope that others will notice and be impressed by their charity, prayer, or fasting. According to the Son of God, a disciple can only seek the response of blessing from one source: either from other people or from the heavenly Father. If Jesus’ disciples desire to receive the notice and praise of others for doing their deeds of piety, that is the only blessing they will receive. (CC)

*πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς*—This articular infinitive after *πρὸς* expresses the purpose of the prior infinitive *μὴ ποιεῖν*. The dative *αὐτοῖς* is not the rare dative of personal agency and so should not be translated, “in order to be seen *by* them.” Rather, the phrase means “to be visible *to* them.” The same construction is in 23:5, and constructions with a similar meaning using passive forms of *φαίνω* appear in 6:5, 16, 18 (negated); 23:28. These constructions arise when the *active intransitive* meaning of the verb (*θεάομαι* or *φαίνω*) is expressed through the *passive* and/or *deponent* forms of the verb, which come to mean “to attract the attention of someone,” “to be visible to someone,” or “to appear to someone.” (CC)

The implied subject of the passive infinitive is “you,” not “righteousness.” The “you” naturally carries over from being the subject of the prior verb to this purpose infinitive. Greek would need a feminine singular accusative pronoun,

αὐτήν (πρὸς τὸ αὐτὴν θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς), if it were the “righteousness” that was visible to others. (CC)

Jesus did not want the good works of His disciples to bring them personal glory but to glorify the Father (5:16). (TLSB)

Shriners for publicity – Faith and good works...

In the sight of God a good work is everything that a child of God does, speaks or thinks in faith according to the Ten Commandments, for the glory of God, for the benefit of his neighbor. (LSC – Koehler Notes p. 188)

It is not for man to say what works are good in the sight of God, God Himself must do this, and He does tell us in the Bible. An unregenerate man cannot do a truly good work. (LSC – Koehler Notes p. 188)

Hebrews 11:6, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Outwardly his works may appear very good to us, but God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). As natural man has no faith, and as his works do not proceed from true care and love of God, they are not acceptable to God. Only a child of God is able and willing to bring forth the fruit of good works. (LSC – Koehler Notes p. 188)

John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Yet not everything a Christian does is also a good work. Whatever proceeds from our old Adam is evil. (LSC – Koehler Notes p. 189)

Romans 7:18, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”

Ephesians 4:22, “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.”

Only when faith, the new man, prompts us, do we bring forth good works. (LSC – Koehler Notes p. 189)

Ephesians 4:24, “and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

We should not invent good works of our own, but use the Law as a guide and rule, where God has told us what He would have us do. (LSC – Koehler Notes p. 189)

Matthew 15:9, “and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Such works must be done in the right spirit, not by coercion, but joyfully and willingly, as angels do the will of God in heaven; not from a selfish motive to earn something for ourselves, but from love; not for our own glory, but for the glory of God and for benefit of our neighbor. Luther says, “It is impossible that a work should please God which is not done in free love.” Works which God has neither commanded nor forbidden are in themselves indifferent, *Adiaphora*, and we are free to do or not do them. Yet also in these things we should seek the glory of God. (LSC – Koehler Notes p. 189)

John 14:15, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

1 Corinthians 10:31, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

Galatians 5:13, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.”

**6:2-4** After the general exhortation of 6:1, Jesus begins by addressing the motive behind his disciples’ deeds of mercy and charity (6:2–4). He presumes, of course, that his disciples will show such mercy; indeed, those who have become his disciples can be truly called “the merciful” (5:7). In what context, we may ask, will his disciples carry out such good works? The two options are these: either in the world of their fellows and for the purpose of gaining their approval, or in the realm of their heavenly Father and for the sake of his approval. The sinfulness of seeking to be glorified by men is all the more strongly emphasized when one recalls the original purpose for the disciples’ lives of service as the salt of the earth and the light of the world (5:13–16). Their calling is to live in such a way that their good works cause other people to “glorify your Father who is in heaven” (5:16). Who will be glorified by the good deeds: the disciples themselves or God the Father? Jesus’ words thus are stern, warning his disciples away from such motives as personal recognition or accomplishment. (CC)

**6:2 SO WHEN** – οὖν—Since 6:1 is the general principle that grounds the entire argument of 6:2–18, the οὖν here is truly inferential: “therefore.” (CC)

**NEEDY** – The poor were cared for mainly through private almsgiving (cf. Dt. 15:11). (TLSB)

ANNOUNCE WITH TRUMPETS – μή σαλπίσσης ἔμπροσθέν σου—There is apparently no real evidence to support a literal blowing of trumpets at the doing of good deeds in first-century Judaism. In light of Jesus' hyperbolic language in 6:3 about the ignorance of the left hand, his words here are best taken as figurative (cf. also the hyperbolic language in 5:29–30). Today we might say, “Do not *broadcast* what you are doing,” without any real reference to radio waves. (CC)

THE HYPOCRITES DO – ὡσπερ οἱ ὑποκριταί—The first-century denotation of the term “hypocrite” does not necessarily include purposeful feigning of false motives. Someone can be a hypocrite without knowing it. The key ingredient is the contrast between authentic and inauthentic behavior or teaching. “Hypocrites” can be such and yet not be consciously aware of their errors and their motives. (CC)

RECEIVE THEIR REWARD – ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν—This clause recurs in 6:5, 16. The verb ἀπέχω means “to receive in full what is due,” and according to its meaning, the verb naturally emphasizes ongoing result; once what is due is received, the resultant state continues. This explains the traditional translation of this present indicative with an English perfect tense: “They *have* received their reward.” Moulton and Milligan observe that in the papyri the verb “is constantly found in the sense of ‘I have received,’ as a technical expression in drawing up a receipt.” They note the comment of Deissmann that the clause in Mt 6:2, 5, 16 means “*They can sign the receipt of their reward: their right to receive the reward is realized, precisely as if they had already been given a receipt for it.*” (CC)

**6:3** WHEN YOU GIVE – σοῦ δὲ ποιούντος ἐλεημοσύνην—Of itself, the position of σοῦ is not necessarily emphatic, for Matthew very often places the referent of a genitive absolute first. However, in light of the clearly emphatic positioning of the pronoun σύ at the same place in the parallel arguments that follow (6:6, 17), this first pronoun is likely also placed first for contrasting emphasis with those who seek to be visible to others. Hence it is italicized in the translation: “But when *you ...*” (CC)

LEFT HAND...RIGHT HAND – μή γνώτω ἡ ἀριστερά σου—Prohibitions with aorist stem verbs normally use the aorist subjunctive, not the aorist imperative, which is here (γνώτω). Wallace remarks that there are only eight examples of μή plus the aorist imperative in the NT. The others are in Mt 24:17, 18; Mk 13:15 (twice; the second time with μηδέ), 16; Lk 17:31 (twice). All these examples are third person. (CC)

As with the reference to sounding a trumpet (6:2), Jesus' words about keeping the left hand ignorant of the right hand's activity are hyperbole. Though Jesus does not mention this result, one of the benefits of truly secret works of mercy is that the person who receives them is ignorant of the human agent who offered

the help. Consequently, the person whose need has been met can offer thanks to God—and to God alone! (CC)

**6:4 WILL REWARD YOU** – ὁ πατήρ ... ἀποδώσει σοι—This promise of future reward by the Father is repeated in 6:4, 6, 18. It should be understood eschatologically, especially in light of the expectation of persecution for Jesus' disciples during this life (5:10–12). The addition by most manuscripts of ἐν τῷ φανερῷ, “in the open,” at the end of 6:4, 6, and 18 would have the effect of diminishing the eschatological nature of the promise if it referred to the present, but it is more likely that “in the open” is an end-time reference to what will be revealed on the Last Day, since it stands in contrast to the giving of alms now “in secret” (ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ, 6:4; cf. “in secret” in 6:6 and “in hiddenness” in 6:18). (CC)

The eschatological paying of a reward in the reign of heaven is a strange business, however. The reward received apparently has no relationship to the amount of work done, for all the workers are paid the same wage regardless of how long they have worked (see 20:1–16, and especially 20:8 and its use of ἀποδίδωμι ... τὸν μισθόν). This is the realm of grace, and not normal human business practice! (CC)

The primary reference is probably to the eschaton. God will sort it all out in the end. His blessing is the only one that really counts. He sees the good deeds, even those done in secret. Jesus' teaching can set his disciples free from needing the approval of others. (CC)

**6:1–4** Jesus calls us to hide our good works when we are tempted to show them. Our works must glorify the Father. The only blessing that counts is the one received from His generous hand. His grace perfects even the least of our good works. • Loving Father, may my giving to the needy always bring You glory. Amen. (TLSB)

### *Prayer*

**<sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. <sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup> “This, then, is how you should pray: ”“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ <sup>14</sup> For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your**

heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

**6:5-6** After his teaching on true motives for doing works of charity (6:1–4), the Son of God takes up the topic of rightly motivated prayer, which is just as vital today as it was then. This is such an important subject that Matthew has given his readers/hearers an expanded little “catechism” of Jesus’ teaching on prayer. Mt 6:5–6 corresponds structurally to the teaching on almsgiving (6:2–4) and to the teaching on fasting (6:16–18). Matthew, however, follows the basic teaching on true motives for prayer (6:5–6) with Jesus’ revelation about the *form and the content* for prayer (6:7–15). Prayer that is pleasing to God is simple, not long-winded, and it is rooted in the knowledge that the Father in heaven knows the needs of Jesus’ disciples. Moreover, Jesus goes on to give what the church has long treasured as “the Lord’s Prayer” (6:9–13). As Luther stated: “So this prayer is far superior to all others that we might devise ourselves. ... Thus there is no nobler prayer to be found on earth” (LC III 23). After the Our Father, Jesus in 6:14–15 expands the significance of its Fifth Petition regarding forgiveness (6:12). (CC)

**6:5 NOT LIKE...HYPOCRITES** – καὶ ὅταν προσεύχησθε, οὐκ ἔσεσθε—Notice the back and forth variation between second person plural forms (as in 6:5, 7–9) and second person singular forms (as in 6:6) that characterizes this entire section (6:1–7:6). The rhetorical effect is, perhaps, to include all disciples (plural) and each disciple (singular) in Jesus’ words. Some transmitters of the text seem to have felt that the variation is unusual and attempted to smooth it out by making the verbs singular in 6:5 (προσεύχη, as in 6:6, and ἔση) and the pronouns plural in 6:21. L and W most markedly show this tendency to harmonize to the near context. (CC)

The future indicative ἔσεσθε stands in the same relative position in this subunit on prayer as do the imperatival forms μὴ σαλπίζης (6:2, on giving alms) and μὴ γίνεσθε (6:16, on fasting). It is, accordingly, almost certainly an imperatival future. (CC)

Prayer is addressed to God, and only God can rightly respond to it. What supreme contradiction and hypocrisy it is, Jesus teaches, when human beings posture and pose in their praying so as to be visible to (and presumably admired by) other people! All who posture in that way have effectively redirected their prayers away from God and toward their fellows; they have already received all the response they are going to get. (CC)

**PRAY STANDING** – Jesus was not criticizing this posture for prayer but the ostentatious motive behind it. To stand could show any of the following: An expression of readiness to serve (Gn. 18:8, 22: 1 Ki.17:1; 2 Chr. 34:31), the common posture for prayer (Jb. 30:20; Mt. 6:5; Mk. 11:25; cf. 1 Kl. 8:14) and also

of worship (Ne. 9:4-5). In Ne. 8:5, the people stand to show their respect for the public reading of God's Word. (TLSB)

**6:6 BUT WHEN YOU PRAY** – σὺ δὲ ὅταν προσεύχη—The grammatically unnecessary pronoun σὺ provides emphatic contrast with how the hypocrites pray, so its translation is italicized (“But when *you* are praying ...”). See also the first textual note on 6:3. Jesus' words shift from second person plural in 6:5 to second person singular here in 6:6. Each person must in the first place rightly pray on his or her own before joining in the plural prayers of the community. (CC)

**INTO YOUR ROOM** – By contrast, Jesus' hyperbole removes any possible misdirection of prayer: go and pray in a little closet with the door locked—in secret, where no one can see you, except your heavenly Father, who alone sees what is done in secret (6:6, echoing 6:4). And remember the promise. This is life under the Father's care, and almighty God is your Father in heaven. He will respond to your prayer with blessing! (CC)

**DONE IN SECRET...REWARD** – With this wordplay, Jesus made the point that God, who is invisible, sees and hears us even when what we do is invisible to other people. (TLSB)

**6:7-8** Matthew now gives his readers/hearers additional teaching that focuses on the form and content of prayer that flows from true motives (6:7–15). These verses offer a world of theology and guidance as Jesus' disciples desire to pray. This authoritative revelation on prayer is firmly rooted in Jesus' first-century Jewish context. But here are truth and help for his disciples of all times, for as long as they need to pray, that is, until the reign of God comes in all its fullness and prayer will be dissolved into pure praise and thanksgiving (e.g., Rev 5:8–14). (CC)

**6:7 MANY WORDS** – ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν—The range of possible meanings for ἐν with the dative is notoriously wide. Here it has a causal force, as it also does in 11:6 and 13:57. While πολυλογία occurs only here in the NT, this compound noun's derivation (πολυ-, “many,” plus λογ-, “word”) and meaning (“wordiness”) are obvious, in contrast to those of the other rare word in the prayer, ἐπιούσιος (see the textual note on 6:11). (CC)

Jesus' disciples are not to be like the outsiders, non-disciples, unbelievers when they pray. Jesus specifically rejects the thinking that the deity needs some sort of extra effort on the part of the devotees in order for their prayers to be heard. Longwinded, wordy prayers are not a sign of piety, nor are they some guarantee that God will hear the prayers of his children. This is life under the *Father's* care. Jesus' disciples do not need to be like “the Gentiles” (Mt 6:7), and that for one all-important reason: “Your Father, before you ask him, knows [the things] of which you have need” (6:8)! (CC)



Meaningless babble. Prayer at this time might have included incantations. Jesus does not condemn repeating prayers. When praying in Gethsemane Jesus illustrates that repetition in prayer is not wrong, so long as one's heart is sincere in the asking. (26:44 note)

LIKE PAGANS – Idolaters whose gods were alleged to thrive on incantation and repetition. Augustine: “Gentiles... make it their endeavor to exercise the tongue rather than to cleanse the heart” (NPNF1 6:37). (TLSB)

**6:8 FATHER KNOWS WHAT YOU NEED** – οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὧν χρείαν ἔχετε—Greek routinely omits the antecedent of the relative pronoun (here: ὧν). The full construction in Greek would be οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ταῦτα ὧν χρείαν ἔχετε, “For your Father knows *these things* of which you have need.” (CC)

Note well that the Father's prior knowledge of the disciples' needs does not issue forth in this notion: “Well, then, since God already knows what I need, then I don't have to pray.” Scripture teaches throughout what Pascal, cited by C. S. Lewis, stated: “Pascal says that God ‘instituted prayer in order to allow His creatures the dignity of causality.’ ” There are needs that we have, and if we do not ask concerning them, God may not give the corresponding blessings that he would confer in answer to our prayers. Of course, at all times God Himself retains what Lewis calls “discretionary power” over the granting of our prayer or the giving of gifts without our prayer. The Father's knowledge of our needs, however, is impetus and motivation for Jesus' disciples to pray all the more confidently for the things that they need—that is to say, for the things that the Our Father teaches us that we need. (CC)

An economy of expression in prayer is acceptable to our Father because He knows all of our needs. Prayer is based on trust, not on magic or manipulation. Make your request, and trust that He will act. (Mary in the Wedding at Cana says: “They have no more wine.” Then she tells the servants, “Do whatever he tells you” John 2:3, 5) Yet, our Lord also taught us to pray persistently from our hearts.

Isaiah 6:24, “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”

The notes for this verse... Luther: “Our prayer pleases God because He has commanded it, made promises, and given form to our prayer. For that reason He is pleased with our prayer, He requires it and delights in it, because He promises, commands, and shapes it. Therefore only the prayer of the godly is a prayer for the sake of God's excellent promises, since we know that they are acceptable and pleasing. But prayer of the ungodly is sin. God cannot get enough of the prayers of the godly. Therefore the prayer of the godly is likened to the most attractive odor which one cannot smell enough. Then He says *I will*

*hear it.* It is not only guaranteed, but it is actually already obtained” [AE 17:393]. (TLSB)

**6:9-13** Thus Matthew brings us to the heart of Christian prayer, both with regard to its pattern and its content. Jesus says, “Pray indeed like this” (6:9), making it clear that the Our Father can be used as a guide or general pattern for his disciples as they pray. These nine short lines have become, of course, a verbatim prayer that has been translated into countless languages and prayed by countless believers. The following comments obviously will not exhaust the meaning and impact of the prayer-pattern that Jesus gives. But they will, one trusts, be an encouragement not only to understand what Jesus says, but also to pray more fervently as he desires us to do. (CC)

Two brief introductory remarks are in order. First, scholars debate questions of source criticism when comparing the two versions of the Lord’s Prayer in Mt 6:9–13 and Lk 11:2–4. The majority seem to regard Luke’s shorter version as in some sense more “original” than Matthew’s longer version. This could very well be the case. Yet given the brief and memorable form in which both prayers are found and the likelihood that Jesus taught about prayer on much more than one occasion, we should not reject the possibility that there were several versions of the Lord’s Prayer known to the apostles, and that all of them came from Jesus himself. (CC)

Second, in modern North America, “the Lord’s Prayer” is so well-known that there are probably those who regard it as the common prayer of all who are religious in any sense of the term. My readers of a sufficient age will be able to remember public occasions during which a mixed crowd of churchgoers and non-church members were all asked to recite the Lord’s Prayer together, and they—including unbelievers—could and did do so. The Lord’s Prayer, however, is not the common property of all. It is for the disciples of Jesus, and so perhaps it could be better served by being called “the Disciples’ Prayer”! Only those whom the Son of God has called to faith and discipleship have received the privilege and honor of addressing the Father of Jesus, the Son, as “our Father” (6:9). For only Jesus’ disciples have come to believe that the reign of God, for which this prayer teaches them to pray, has already begun to manifest itself in history through Jesus and through Jesus alone. (CC)

**6:9** THIS THEN IS HOW – οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς—The translation “Therefore, you, pray indeed like this” reflects the present stem of the imperative προσεύχεσθε. (For the significance of present stem imperatives, see the first textual note on 6:1.) The present imperative and the emphatic pronoun ὑμεῖς (see BDF, § 277.1) lend notable emphasis to Jesus’ invitation and pattern for prayer! (CC)

Jesus gave His disciples a model or general pattern for prayer, one that has become a fixed part of Christian worship. The version in Luke is slightly different. (TLSB)

OUR FATHER – Beginning in 5:16, Jesus, the Son, has repeatedly referred to God the Father as “your Father,” that is, not just as his own Father (see 2:15; 3:17), but also as the Father of his disciples (5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8). Now as Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray, he tells them to address God in a way that is both intimate and corporate. God is not “*my* Father” so much as he is “*our* Father.” Jesus’ disciples are set in community with one another. As will become transparently clear when Jesus names the group of *twelve* apostles in chapter 10, in calling men and women to believing discipleship, Jesus is reconstituting the people of God, the new and true Israel. Together they pray, “*our* Father.” (CC)

And they pray, following in the pattern and life of Jesus himself, “*our Father.*” Especially since the influential essay of Jeremias, the importance of Jesus’ own prayer-address to God the Father has received abundant scholarly and churchly attention. Jeremias observed that there are very few references to God as “Father” in the literature of Palestinian Judaism from the first few centuries before and after Christ. Even in the later rabbinic literature, where there are “rather more instances” of this address to God, “*our Father*” is not the dominant pattern for speaking about or to God in prayer. (CC)

Jeremias then described the pattern of Jesus’ own speech to and about God. Through form-critical analysis, he dismissed as inauthentic a large number of references to God as “Father” in the synoptic sayings of Jesus. Despite his unwarranted skepticism, he nevertheless retained sufficient authentic material to conclude that Jesus characteristically spoke to his disciples (and to them alone!) of God as “your Father.” More than this, Jesus boldly claimed in public teaching that God was “my Father” (e.g., 7:21; 10:32–33). Jeremias asserts: “There is nothing in Rabbinic literature which corresponds to this use of ‘my Father’ by Jesus.” (CC)

Perhaps the most well-known aspect of Jeremias’ work pertains to Jesus’ own address to God in prayer as “Abba” (אבא). Jeremias claimed: “Whereas there is not a single instance of God being addressed as Abba in the literature of Jewish prayer, Jesus always addressed him in this way (with the exception of the cry from the cross, Mark 15:34 [and the parallel in Mt 27:46]). So we have here a quite unmistakable characteristic of the *ipsissima vox Jesu* [‘the very voice of Jesus’].” Claiming that the term “Abba” never quite loses the connotations that arise from its function as a child’s address to his father, Jeremias writes: “For Jesus to venture to take this step was something new and unheard of. He spoke to God like a child to its father, simply, inwardly, confidently. Jesus’ use of *abba* in addressing God reveals the heart of his relationship with God.” (CC)

This holds true, in Jeremias' analysis, for how Jesus teaches his disciples to pray as well. According to Jeremias, Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer ("Father" in Lk 11:2, as opposed to "our Father who is in heaven" in Mt 6:9) preserves the more primitive "Father/Abba" address that Jesus taught his disciples to use. Paul provides evidence that the early Christian churches preserved the use of the Aramaic term (Greek ἀββα, "Abba," is in Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6). The identity of sonship and all its attendant privileges are wrapped up in the believers' use of this one term: "For them, the privilege of repeating Jesus' 'Abba' amounted to an anticipation of the fulfillment of the promise: 'I will be your father, and you will be my sons and daughters' (II Cor. 6:18 = II Sam. 7:14, free quotation)" (CC)

I have briefly described Jeremias' analysis because its general conclusions are still widely cited in both scholarly and popular contexts. And yet subsequent scholarship has qualified many if not most of this great German scholar's conclusions. It is not true, for example, that "Abba" is exclusively the speech of a small child and can thus be rendered in contemporary English as "Daddy." Moreover, Jesus' use of this address to the heavenly Father was not unique in his day, although his regular use of it is probably unusual. One also wonders about assertions to the effect that Jesus *always* addressed God as "Abba." We simply do not know the full range of ways that the Lord Christ in the days of his humble ministry prayed to God the Father. (CC)

In one way it is curious that Jeremias' conclusions seemed to have had such wide impact among conservative students of Scripture. Jeremias wanted to know what the historical Jesus said and did and how Jesus' own prayer and teaching were extended and carried on in the early church. In the process, he rejected massive amounts of material from the Synoptic Gospels as secondary and inauthentic material that did not come in any meaningful way from Jesus of Nazareth himself. Consequently, his conclusions about the meaning and significance of "Abba" in Jesus' mouth and in the mouths of his disciples are based on a very small database, that database being the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels that he judged to be authentic. By contrast, if one allows the database to include all the canonical material regarding Jesus' understanding of his own identity as God's Son and his disciples' identity as God's adopted sons and daughters, then the conclusions reached by Jeremias become somewhat obvious. (CC)

Disciples pray as a community to their true Father. Although this name for God was known and used in the OT, Jesus used it with greater frequency and intimacy. He taught His disciples to pray to God most personally by calling Him "Father." The early Christians viewed the Church as a family. (TLSB)

IN HEAVEN – "Pray *indeed* like this," Jesus taught (see the textual note on 6:9). "Speak to God as your Father because of me. Speak to your Father in heaven." This description of God as "in heaven" communicates two truths. First, it emphasizes God's ability to hear and to respond to the prayer of Jesus' disciples.

Since God is “in heaven,” he rules over all things. As a father has compassion on his children, so will this Father care for Jesus’ disciples (Ps 103:13). Second, the Father is in heaven—but the disciples are on the earth. Things are amiss on the earth, in the creation that has fallen away from God. The Father, who is enthroned in heaven, has the power to restore his creatures on earth. The first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer specifically are prayers for those on earth, that God would act for them on behalf of his name, his reign, and his will. (CC)

**HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME** – The name of God is holy in itself. God’s OT name was the ineffable, sacred Tetragrammaton, יהוה (cf. Ex 34:5–7; Lev 11:44; 20:7–8). But God’s holy “name” is more than any particular name for him in the OT or NT because his name cannot be separated from his holy person. God’s name is his presence, the extension and the revelation of his being and his salvation. In the OT, it was the “name” of Yahweh, that is, his saving presence, that filled the temple of Solomon (1 Ki 9:3, 7; 2 Chr 7:16, 20; see also Is 6:1–3 with the Trisagion). There is no need for anyone or anything to make God’s name holy for it already is so. (CC)

Yet God desires that his creatures regard his name, that is, his presence and his way of salvation and truth, as set apart and worthy of reverence and honor—as holy. When God’s ways are rejected and mocked, his name is not being hallowed, but profaned. This is the situation to which Ezekiel 36 speaks. Jerusalem had whored after other gods, imitating the spiritual harlotry of her older sister, Samaria (northern Israel; see Ezekiel 16 and 23). God’s righteous wrath brought the people into exile among the nations. The shameful conduct of the people who bore Yahweh’s name left the ways of Yahweh open to ridicule and question in the sight of those nations; Israel thus caused Yahweh’s name to be profaned among the nations (Ezek 36:1–20). (CC)

In response, Yahweh promises that he will act: And I will hallow [וְקִדְשֵׁנִי; LXX: ἁγιάσω] my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am Yahweh, declares the Lord Yahweh, when I am hallowed [בְּהִקְדָּשִׁי; LXX: ἐν τῷ ἁγιασθῆναί με] through you before their eyes. ... I will gather you from all the lands. ... And I will sprinkle clean water on you, and ... I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new Spirit I will put within you. ... And I will put my Spirit within you. ... And you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezek 36:23–28) (CC)

In the most important sense, God hallows his own name by his deeds of judgment and (especially) salvation. As Yahweh did when he brought Israel back from exile, so in greater measure will he do on the earth when he shows forth in the sight of all the nations the power and wonder of his name, that is, his saving deeds in Jesus. On the Last Day, God’s name will be fully hallowed on the earth. For all will bow the knee to Jesus, who came in the name of the Lord God of Israel, and who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, shares in the one divine “name” (Mt 28:19). All who receive the triune name through the cleansing waters

of Baptism and faith in the Son receive the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Spirit within, and membership in God's people. All who thus confess and honor the Son thereby honor the Father and hallow the name of God (cf. Jn 5:23). (CC)

The emphasis of Luther's Small Catechism undeniably falls upon the present activity of God in the lives of his children. God's name is hallowed when "the Word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as God's children, also live holy lives according to it" (SC III 5). Thus, the Reformer's treatment is on target, but not comprehensive. Although the first three petitions focus our attention *primarily* upon the consummation of all things, there is nevertheless the need for God to hear and answer these petitions during the time when the end of all things has not yet come. For God is at work in our world through the sowing of the Gospel seed of the Word (13:1–9), and this is the emphasis that Luther has rightly captured in the Small Catechism. This Gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come (24:14). (CC)

**6:10** *your kingdom come*. A reference to the future consummation of the kingdom. (CSB)

God reigns as king, now and always (Pss 10:16; 29:10; 146:10). His rule and reign, however, are not evident everywhere on the earth. Men and women still strive to assert their own rule, their own sinful dominion. Satan's power and temptations often hold sway. Jesus' disciples pray, "Let your reign come on the earth!" Only on the final day of royal triumph, when God's enemies are finally and fully judged and his people finally and fully delivered, will the reign of God be manifest and known in all the creation (cf. Psalm 110). Jesus' disciples pray for that day when God will be all, and in all (1 Cor 15:28). In light of the meaning of "the reign of God" in Matthew's Gospel, this Second Petition is the strongest possible demonstration that Jesus teaches his disciples to look forward to and to pray for the final victory of God over all evil and sin, the victory that the Father will accomplish through the return of the Son as the Judge of living and dead. (CC)

WILL BE DONE ON EARTH – ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς—The first three petitions ("Let your name be hallowed"; "Let your reign come"; "Let your will be done") closely parallel one another in form and meaning. Moreover, after the phrase "as in heaven, also on earth," there is a clear shift in the petitions from third-person imperatives concerning God to second person address and explicit concern with "us" and "our" needs. Hence, it is almost certain that this comparative phrase, "as in heaven, also on earth," closes off the first part of the prayer and that *it applies equally to all three of the first petitions*. The disciples are to pray that God's name would be hallowed *on the earth* as in heaven; that his reign come *on the earth* as in heaven; that his will be done *on the earth* as in heaven. Such an earthly, creational emphasis flows out of the fundamentally end-time existence and faith of Jesus' disciples. There is an "already and not yet" flavor to the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer. (CC)

Is the will of God done on the earth? In ultimate terms, yes and always. To speak in practical and specific fashion, however, the will of God for his creation is not yet happening in the way and to the extent that he desires. So Jesus' disciples pray that God would act, that he would intervene in such a way that the will of Satan and sinful men would be broken, and the gracious and perfect will of God would take place on the earth, as it already is happening in heaven in the presence of God and the holy angels. At the consummation of the age, this will take place fully on the earth. Jesus' disciples pray for that day. (CC)

Already now our Father breaks and hinders Satan's evil will. When Christ comes again, all enemies will be defeated (cf. 1 Co. 15:26; Heb. 2:14-15). *On earth as it is in heaven* applies equally to the three initial petitions. We on earth pray that God would act on behalf of His name, His kingdom, and His will. These three petitions will be perfectly fulfilled only on the Last Day. (TLSB)

The first three petitions of the Our Father are, then, in the first place, eschatological. They are prayers for God to accomplish what he will bring about fully on the Last Day. They are like the Aramaic liturgical prayer that survived into the Greek-speaking Pauline congregations: μαράνα θά, "Maranatha," "Our Lord, come!" 1 Cor 16:22; see also Rev 22:17, 20). These petitions, though, are prayers not *only* for God to usher in the end of all things on the Last Day. The reign of heaven stands near, even now in the ministry of Jesus (4:17). When Jesus first taught his disciples to pray in this way, he himself was carrying out his ministry of hallowing God's name by revealing the Father to those to whom he, the Son, chose to reveal the Father (11:25–27). Jesus' ministry of teaching and preaching and healing and exorcism had *already* brought the reign of God into that generation (12:28). And it was Jesus who completely and perfectly set his own will on accomplishing the will of the Father, to the point of perfect obedience in the garden and on the cross; he accomplished the prayer that he himself taught, "Let your will be done" (26:42). Thus, from our vantage point of life and discipleship after Jesus' death and resurrection, we pray the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer in thanksgiving, acknowledging that these prayers have already been answered in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God has already acted to save. (CC)

Until Jesus comes again, his disciples will continue to pray and to believe that even now in our own lives, God will arise and enable his name to be hallowed on the earth through us, his children. The reign of God will continue to come as the Good News of Jesus—in spoken words and poured water and eaten Supper—continues to extend God's gracious rule in the lives of those who already follow him, and in those who will be drawn so to follow. God will continue to carry out his will, and especially his will that not even one little one who believes in him would perish (18:14). God will use instruments or means to carry out that will. Often Jesus' disciples will find that they themselves form part of the answer to their own prayers as they live and speak as the world's salt and light (5:13–16).

Until the Last Day, Jesus' disciples will pray these petitions on behalf of all the saints on earth, and for the benefit of all on earth, including the conversion of unbelievers, that they too might be encompassed by God's gracious reign in Christ and thus be saved. Thus Jesus' disciples pray the Our Father in thanksgiving, present expectation, and unwavering hope. (CC)

**6:11** *bread*. Represents the necessities, but not the luxuries, of life. (CSB)

We ask our Father to supply our daily needs. Preparing bread was a daily task. (TLSB)

Deuteronomy 24:6, "Do not take a pair of millstones—not even the upper one—as security for a debt, because that would be taking a man's livelihood as security."

Note for Deut. 24:6 Women usually ground meal with a mill and baked bread each day. Taking a family's mill would threaten people's lives. (TLSB)

τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον—Even though English translations unanimously render this by the well-known "our *daily* bread," the semantic difficulties with the adjective ἐπιούσιος are notorious. Apparently this adjective occurs nowhere in Greek literature before its use in Mt 6:11 and Lk 11:3. The philologist is forced to search for "likely" meanings based on possible etymological derivations, which are always an uncertain foundation for meaning. BDAG summarizes four of the possible derived meanings advocated by modern scholars: (CC)

1. It may come from the preposition ἐπί plus οὐσία ("that which exists," derived from εἶμι, "to be, exist"), yielding a meaning such as "bread necessary for existence."
2. It may be derived from a phrase such as ἐπὶ τὴν οὔσαν (with reference to the noun ἡμέραν), which contains the present participle (οὔσαν) of the linking verb εἶμι, resulting in "bread for the day that is, for the current day, for today."
3. It may come from the phrase ἡ ἐπιούσα ἡμέρα, meaning "bread for the next day, for tomorrow." ἐπιούσα is the present active participle of ἔπειμι (ἐπί plus the verb εἶμι), "to come upon, come near." This third view gains support from the fact that the phrase τῇ ἐπιούσῃ (sometimes with ἡμέρα or νυκτί), "on the next (day/night)," occurs in the NT (Acts 7:26; 16:11; 20:15; 21:18; 23:11). See also τῷ ἐπίοντι σαββάτῳ in Acts 18:19 in manuscript D.
4. It could be formed from ἐπιέναι, the simple present infinitive of ἔπειμι (ἐπί plus the verb εἶμι), "to come upon, come near," yielding "bread for the future."

The first two derivations involve the verb εἶμι, "to be, exist." However, the presence of the first *iota* (the third letter, ι) in ἐπιούσιος makes a derivation from ἐπί plus some form of εἶμι ("to be, exist") less likely, though not impossible. One might reasonably expect that if the preposition ἐπί were joined to a participle of εἶμι that began with a diphthong, there would have been vowel contraction so as to eliminate the *iota* from ἐπί, resulting in some form of ἐπί plus οὔσα such as



ἐπούσιος. That contraction happens with other compounds, such as when ἐπί plus οὐράνιος yields ἐπουράνιος, “heavenly.” Though the etymology does not answer the question of meaning or of referent, the more likely derivation of the adjective ἐπούσιος is that suggested above in numbers 3 and 4. That is, the adjective probably derives from the compound verb ἔπειμι (the preposition ἐπί plus the verb εἶμι, not the verb εἶμι), “to come upon, come near.” The present stem forms of εἶμι preserve the initial *iota* in all instances (e.g., the present infinitive ἐπιέναι). A derivation from εἶμι would explain the first *iota* in ἐπούσιος. If that is correct, the adjective probably means something like “coming” or “drawing near.” (CC)

Throughout the centuries there have been those who have read and prayed the Fourth Petition as a direct reference to the food the Father provides that sustains the lives and bodies of Jesus’ disciples. It is sufficient to understand the Fourth Petition as a humble request that *God would give us each day the bread that is coming or drawing near to us from his fatherly hand.* The combination of “today” and “coming” need not be seen as a redundancy. To the contrary, it emphasizes that Jesus’ disciples cannot procure or provide today’s bread for themselves; it must be the bread that is drawing near to them *from the Father’s provision.* There is also no contradiction between such a prayer for the body’s physical needs and Jesus’ later teaching against worry (6:25–34). The needs of the body are just that: *needs* that the Father knows that Jesus’ disciples have (6:8). Jesus in 6:25–34 leads his disciples away from obsession and worry over bodily needs. He does not prohibit or hinder us from praying to the Father to provide for such needs; rather, trusting prayer to the Father is the antidote for sinful worry! Moreover, the presence of this “ordinary” petition that begins the second half of the prayer is a salutary reminder that our creaturely existence, in which basic bodily needs must be met, is the design and purpose of God the Creator. We must neither despise nor take for granted our daily bread. Implicit in the prayer is that Jesus’ disciples will know that others too need daily bread, and disciples will be willing to share from generous hearts that have acknowledged the Father’s provision. (CC)

In light of Jesus’ later teaching in 6:25–34 about the dangers of “mammonolatry” and worry about daily needs, the Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer invites the disciples of Jesus to be modest and non-specific about the needs of the body. The bread that is coming near from the Father’s provision—that is what we are to desire and for which we are to ask. All Christians face the danger of being blind to the ways in which their own society corrupts their perspective; it is hard to tell what is happening when you are in the middle of it. However, it seems pretty clear that for those twenty-first-century North American Christians who live in what is perhaps the wealthiest society in the history of the human race, there is a grave danger of confusing what we want with what we need. We live in a culture that deifies dissatisfaction, and there is an entire industry that devotes itself to selling products, many of which no one actually needs. Perhaps we might pray a longer version of the Fourth Petition: “Teach us to distinguish what we actually

need from what we can do without. Give us today our needed bread, which comes from you. And lead us today to give to others what they lack.” (CC)

**6:12** *debts*. Moral debts, i.e., sins (see note on Lk 11:4). (CSB)

ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν—The pronoun is emphatic and so is italicized in the translation: “as also *we* forgave our debtors.” The second aorist (not perfect!) indicative ἠγάπησα a mortal debt owed to God. If He would not forgive us, we would have to pay “the last penny” (5:26). Our power to forgive comes from having been forgiven. One who refuses to forgive turns away from God’s forgiveness. (TLSB)

ἀφήκαμεν, “we forgave,” is found in  $\aleph^*$  B Z  $f^1$  vg<sup>st</sup> sy<sup>p,h</sup> and a few other Greek manuscripts, while the present indicative, spelled either ἀφίκομεν or ἀφίμεν, “we forgive,” stands in all other witnesses (including *Didache* 8:2) as well as Lk 11:4. It is easier to imagine how the aorist indicative might have been changed to the present indicative to ease the possible implication that God’s forgiveness only comes *after* ours, than to imagine that the reverse process occurred. However, the theology of forgiveness with the aorist indicative here is the same as that found in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (18:23–35). It is disciples, already forgiven and called into trusting fellowship with Jesus, who are empowered both to forgive others and then to pray this prayer according to their own ongoing need for forgiveness. Jesus’ words here (and in 6:14–15) simply show the inevitable link forged between God’s grace and the way disciples deal with other people. (CC)

If the Lord’s Prayer were being taught to anyone other than those who had already become the disciples of Jesus, the Fifth Petition would be a monstrum incertitudinis gratiae all on its own! The aorist indicative ἀφήκαμεν makes it quite clear that those who use the Lord’s Prayer can be characterized as people who themselves have already forgiven their debtors prior to praying this petition. All the more, then, we must emphasize that the entire Our Father, including this petition, is Christ’s gift to his disciples, to the church, to those who have already come under the blessing and the power of his gracious rule and forgiveness (5:3–12). As Jesus’ disciples live their lives in the difficult times of spiritual struggle and battle until he comes again in glory, God’s forgiveness will sustain them and God’s forgiveness will be their constant need. Already forgiven, we continue to need forgiveness. The Gospel proclaims that forgiveness is available from the Father, through the Son. (CC)

The Good News of Jesus is so strong that it also enables his disciples to forgive those who are indebted to them. Such receiving and giving of forgiveness is part and parcel of the disciple’s everyday existence. Christ’s prior call and prior forgiveness make it possible for his disciples to be called, in fact, “the merciful” (5:7). Davies and Allison adroitly comment that the parable of the Unforgiving Servant in 18:23–35 is “the parabolic equivalent of 6.12.” (CC)

Perhaps it might be helpful to offer two pastoral comments at this point. First, one can emphasize that in the case of human beings in this life, forgiveness is essentially an action of the will, empowered by the Holy Spirit, who turns us to Christ and the promise of *his* forgiveness. When I forgive another who has wronged me, I decide that I am willing not to take revenge, not to bear a grudge, not to repay evil for evil, but instead to respond to evil by doing good when I have the opportunity. If the wrong done is particularly severe, a Christian can suffer extreme spiritual and emotional struggle, and the difficulty in forgiving the wrongdoer may well linger for months or years. However, just because the Christian retains mixed emotions after forgiving the wrongdoer does not mean that he or she has not forgiven the other. Moreover, even if the Christian finds that he or she must forgive more often than once, that is still part of the act of forgiving the other! (CC)

Second, there is an important spiritual distinction between finding it hard (or even for a time, being unable) to forgive and being unwilling to do so. There will be times when all the disciple of Jesus can offer is a broken and a contrite heart: “I know, Lord, what you require of me. I long to do it, but cannot, unless you help me.” For such a one, poor in spirit, there is the message of God’s mercy in Christ and the promise of the blessings of the reign of heaven already now: “I forgive you. ... Take and eat. ...” On the other hand, if a Christian looks another in the eye and says, “I know what God requires of me, and I will not do it!” then that is a serious matter. As the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (18:23–35) illustrates well, the *prior* forgiveness of the Master is meant to produce forgiveness for others. If it does not, it can mean that the Master’s forgiveness has been rejected and unless repentance occurs, that his forgiveness ultimately will be withdrawn. The power to forgive, however, comes from Christ’s prior gift to his disciples. In humble recognition of their own need for forgiveness and with the mercy supplied by Jesus’ clemency, his followers of all times are able to forgive others who have wronged them and pray the Fifth Petition. (CC)

**6:13 LEAD NOT...TEMPTATION** – καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν—  
Despite various attempts to soften the causative force of the prohibition, it does not mean “Do not *allow* us to enter temptation” or “Do not *let* us be brought into temptation.” Rather, εἰσφέρω means “to cause someone to enter into a certain event or condition, *bring in*” (BDAG, 2), and so the prohibition with its aorist subjunctive, μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς, means “do not lead/bring.” See the commentary for a fuller discussion. (CC)

The noun πειρασμός occurs in Matthew only here and in 26:41, where Jesus says to the disciples in Gethsemane, “Pray that you might not enter into *temptation*.” The verb πειράζω is always negative in Matthew (“to tempt,” 4:1, 3; 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35) and never neutral or positive (“to test”). Satan is once in Matthew called “the tempter,” ὁ πειράζων (4:3). Therefore, it would be contrary to Matthew’s use of πειρασμός and πειράζω elsewhere if the noun πειρασμός here meant “testing” in a neutral or positive sense. (CC)

In his exposition of the Lord's Prayer in the Small Catechism, Luther rightly grasps the negative force of "tempt":

It is true that God *tempts* no one, but we ask in this prayer that God would preserve and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and gain the victory. (SC III 18) (CC)

Does the word mean "testing" in a neutral way, or does it signify "temptation" in the negative sense that would include the attempt to cause someone to fall into sin? Two factors indicate that πειρασμός in 6:13 means "temptation" in the negative sense. First, both the noun and corresponding verb always have a negative force elsewhere in Matthew; the data are given in the textual note above on 6:13. Second, it would be an exceedingly odd thing for Jesus to teach his disciples to pray that the Father would not test them. The entire testimony of Scripture teaches that God, in fact, regularly tests. (CC)

DELIVER FROM THE EVIL ONE – ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ—See the textual note on 5:37 for the use of πονηρός in Matthew. The presence of πειρασμός, "temptation," in the near context gives further support for the translation "the evil one," because in 4:3 Satan was called ὁ πειράζων, "the tempter." In the Large Catechism Luther understands it so: "In the Greek this petition reads, 'Deliver or preserve us from the Evil One, or the Wicked One' " (LC III 113) (CC)

Luther's positive explanation of the Sixth Petition really applies to the Seventh: "Rather, deliver us from the evil one"; there is no real difference between the prayer "that God would preserve and keep us" and "Deliver us from the evil one." Luther is determined to declare that God would *never* tempt Jesus' disciples to sin, and Luther maintains this on the basis of James 1:13. Luther recognized that the Sixth Petition could be taken to imply that God might lead people into sin; he was not the first to perceive this problem, and discussion of it has not ceased even to this day. (CC)

Separate petitions, but joined in one sentence. We realize that God could allow the devil to tempt us, as Jesus was led into temptation by the Spirit (4:1). But we pray that our Father would guard and keep us from the evil one. Tertullian: "[Jesus], when tempted by the devil, demonstrated who it is that presides over and is the originator of temptation" (ANF 3:684). (TLSB)

The various forms of doxological endings are surely later additions that arose from the liturgical use of the Our Father. The additions range from short to long:

1. A simple "Amen" (17 vg<sup>cl</sup>).
2. Various forms of the "traditional" ending: "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." This ending is attested by the majority of

manuscripts, including the Byzantine Koine texts and is familiar from the KJV and Lutheran liturgies.

3. “For yours is the kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen” (1253 and a few other Greek manuscripts).

None of those endings is found in  $\aleph$  B D Z 0170 <sup>f</sup> / 2211 lat mae bo<sup>pt</sup> or Origen. Given the evident liturgical feel of all of those endings, probably all are later additions. It is difficult to imagine how the shorter version could have arisen by the accidental omission of any of them if they were original. Moreover, it is not possible to appeal directly to the text of *Didache* 8:2 as evidence for an extremely early form of the longer ending. The text of the *Didache* (as known to us) has one of the shorter endings: “For yours is the power and the glory forever” (*Didache* 8:2). However, the transmission of the text of the *Didache* is uncertain, and scholarship is not agreed on how to view the evidence. It is completely within the realm of possibility that the few manuscripts of the *Didache* that we possess have themselves been influenced by later manuscripts of Matthew that had one of the longer endings to the Our Father. (CC)

A doxology for the Lord’s Prayer may have been added as early as the first century in the *Didache*; in Gk Bible manuscripts, as early as the fifth century. These words were likely a liturgical response when the prayer was used in worship. (TLSB)

**6:14-15** Matthew gives his readers/hearers two more verses (6:14–15) that articulate the same teaching as the Fifth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer (6:12). To understand these words of Jesus aright, it must again be emphasized that they are spoken to those who are already the disciples of Jesus and who have already received from the Father the limitless forgiveness of their multitude of sins. That prior divine forgiveness, procured by Christ’s universal atonement, then can and will produce in us as Jesus’ disciples the willingness and ability to forgive others. To turn away from the responsibility to forgive is ultimately to turn away from being forgiven. (CC)

Jesus added these words to reinforce the Fifth Petition, which is key to the prayer (v 12) and to discipleship. He emphasizes the importance of mutual forgiveness in the community of believers. He does not mean that forgiveness is somehow earned. On forgiveness, see Jesus’ extensive teaching in ch 18. (TLSB)

**6:15** *trespasses*. Word for sin meaning to step over the line. (TLSB)

### **The Lord’s Prayer in the Life of the Church: Simple Reflections**

How many pray the Lord’s Prayer several thousand times in the course of a year, and if they were to keep on doing so for a thousand years they would not have tasted nor prayed one iota, one dot [alluding to Mt 5:18: “one jot or one tittle” (KJV)], of it! In a word, the Lord’s Prayer is the greatest martyr on earth (as are

the name and word of God). Everybody tortures and abuses it; few take comfort and joy in its proper use. (CC)

Luther's words have a contemporary ring to them. What Christian has not been dismayed by his own indifference to the Lord's Prayer? What believer has not been chagrined when once again she has offered an unthinking, parrot-like recitation of this prayer while at the same time mentally reviewing the possible lunch menus when the family returns home from church? I have no profound or new antidote to this liturgical and devotional dilemma. Three small reflections, however, can help to shield the Our Father from the abuse that Luther decries and enable the prayer to be more the blessing that it is intended to be. (CC)

First, pastors can *teach* the Lord's Prayer. No Christian should assume that he or she has exhausted all its meaning or application. Abstractions like God's "name" or "kingdom" need to be unpacked over and over again. That will help Christians to pray with the mind as well as the spirit. The more fully we understand the theology of the Lord's Prayer, the better we will be able to pray its petitions and believe its promises. Faith seeks understanding. (CC)

Second, it can be helpful (though surely disturbing) gently to change the cadence of praying the prayer in some alternate but still predictable ways. It dawned on me not too many years ago that in the cadence of my home congregation, it always sounds like there are *eight* petitions, the first of which is "who art in heaven": "Our Father (pause) who art in heaven, (pause) hallowed be thy name (pause)." Since becoming aware of this type of cadence, I have observed it being followed without exception at every occasion possible. At the very least, "Our-Father-who-art-in-heaven" should be spoken as one continuous phrase, for that is what it is. Or the pastor could announce to the congregation that after each petition, a pause of several seconds would follow as an opportunity to reflect more fully on each petition. Perhaps a gentle interruption in the potentially hypnotic flow of publicly praying "the Disciples' Prayer" might be helpful. (CC)

Third, and more substantially, it seems that all too often the Lord's Prayer is tacked on to the *end* of congregational and devotional prayers. Why not *begin* with the Our Father and then let its petitions guide other prayers for the church, the world, the lost, the sick, and the dying? After the Our Father, other prayers can echo it:

- "Father, in our church let us so deal with one another in love and truth that your name would be hallowed among us."
- "Dear Lord, many among us are suffering from illness. Let your reign come upon them to bring healing and strength."
- "Almighty God, frustrate the designs of evil men, and let your will be done on the earth as it is in heaven." (CC)

If the petitions of the Our Father actually help form the substance of all the prayers that follow, the power and blessing of the Lord's Prayer will be more fully realized in our churches and in the lives of us disciples, to whom Jesus continues to say, "Therefore, *you*, pray indeed like this: ..." (6:9). (CC)

**6:5–15** After Jesus warns His disciples not to pray in an ostentatious or merely repetitious manner, He provides them with a prayer of which Luther wrote, “There is no nobler prayer to be found upon earth” (LC III 23). Luther also called the Lord’s Prayer “the greatest martyr” because “everybody tortures and abuses it; few take comfort and joy in its proper use” (AE 43:200). We may at times utter the Lord’s Prayer thoughtlessly. Yet, our Father is fully attentive at all times to our needs and desires. This is our comfort and our joy. • Father, thank You for listening when I come to You in prayer. Amen. (TLSB)

**16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**

Jesus concludes this carefully organized teaching, “Life under the Father’s Care: On Piety” (6:1–18), with brief instruction about the practice of fasting. As with the teaching on acts of charity (6:1–4) and on prayer (6:5–15), the Son is most concerned with turning his disciples away from the motive of seeking honor and blessing from others who may see them fasting, and turning them toward the Father, who sees all things in secret (6:4, 6, 18) and who promises to bless. The structure of 6:16–18 is clearly parallel to that of 6:2–4 and 6:5–6. (CC)

During the Second Temple period, Judaism had a major focus on fasting. Jesus assumes that among his disciples too, fasting will be part of their lives. Yet even in the cultural context of first-century Judaism, Jesus here calls his disciples to a different motive, a different kind of fasting. He says in effect, “Do not be like the hypocrites. Their motive is to receive the notice and admiration of other people. Since that is the reward they seek, they have already received all that they can hope for.” In contrast, Jesus’ disciples are to fast “in the direction” of the heavenly Father alone. Outwardly, their appearance should be normal. Their exercise in prayer or self-control or repentance should be carried out under the umbrella of the heavenly Father’s loving notice. He sees all things done in secret, and he will bless his children. (CC)

For twenty-first-century North American Christians, the most difficult aspect of Jesus’ teaching in 6:16–18 probably is the broader issue of fasting, period. Jesus (and Matthew!) could assume that his hearers were going to be fasting as a regular part of their spiritual lives. Perhaps few Christians today in the context of the United States even consider the possibility. For Lutherans, this is ironic, since Luther took the practice for granted, and his Small Catechism should keep us open to possible use of fasting. (CC)

Luther wrote that “fasting and bodily preparation are in fact a fine external discipline” in preparation for receiving the Lord’s Supper (SC III 9–10). However, many of us modern Lutherans act as if Luther had written: “Fasting and bodily

preparation are in fact a worthless and irrelevant external discipline.” Yet Luther has other important things to say about fasting as a good work for a Christian. (CC)

**6:16 WHEN YOU FAST** – This was common practice in first-century Judaism (cf. 9:14; Luke 18:12). It was done for various reasons: as a spiritual discipline, an aid to prayer, or a form of self-punishment for sin. Sometimes it was evidence of disdain for the body. The wording here implies that Jesus assumed His disciples would fast. (TLSB)

**SHOW MEN THEY ARE FASTING** – ὅπως φανῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύοντες—The clause ὅπως φανῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις is repeated from 6:5. For this construction with the passive verb φανῶσιν and the dative τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, see the third textual note on 6:1. The participle νηστεύοντες expresses the behavior of the hypocrites that they desire others to see. The translation “visible to men as *fasting*” is appropriate. (CC)

Hypocrites disfigure their faces because they want others to notice them. (TLSB)

**6:17** *put oil on your head and wash your face.* Jews put ashes on their heads when fasting. Putting oil on the head and washing the face were reserved for joyous occasions. (CSB)

Usual hygienic steps that help create a normal appearance. (TLSB)

In the first place, Luther warns against any thought that fasting should be done to impress our neighbor, and in this he is simply repeating Jesus’ explicit teaching here in 6:16–18. The Reformer also condemns fasting by a person who thinks that this will somehow make him more pleasing to God. Significantly, fasting is a form of external discipline, and such disciplines are not without value in the Christian life (cf. 1 Cor 9:24–27; 1 Tim 4:8; Heb 12:1). Just as healthy and godly habits can be an aid to one’s faith and love, so explicit disciplines whereby we bring our bodies and our desires under conscious control can bring blessing to our lives. “True fasting consists in the disciplining and restraining of your body, which pertains not only to eating, drinking, and sleeping, but also to your leisure, your pleasure, and to everything that may delight your body or that you do to provide for it and take care of it.” (CC)

Whatever acts of piety Jesus’ disciples may perform, they seek to turn at all times from the desire to impress others. The reality and promise of God the heavenly Father can replace ungodly motives for charity, prayer, and fasting with the confidence that God in heaven desires his children to do such things. In the knowledge of the Father’s promise to bless, Jesus’ disciples are free to be pious in secret, for their Father sees all that is done in secret (6:4, 6, 18), and he promises eschatological blessing. (CC)



**6:18** WILL NOT BE OBVIOUS...FASTING – ὅπως μὴ φανῆς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύων—This is the same construction as in 6:16 (see the first textual note on 6:16), but here the passive verb is negated (μὴ φανῆς) and it and the participle are singular. English hides that “you” is plural in 6:16 but “you” is singular in 6:17–18. Throughout 6:1–7:6 the text alternates between second person singular and plural forms. (CC)

SECRET...WILL REWARD – ἐν τῷ κρυφαίῳ ... ἐν τῷ κρυφαίῳ—This phrase is synonymous with ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ twice in both 6:4 and 6:6 (see the textual note on 6:4). Most manuscripts (L W Θ 0233 0250 f<sup>3</sup> 33 m) try to smooth out the unexpected adjective κρυφαῖος (“hiddenness”) by replacing it with κρυπτός (“secret”) from 6:4 and 6:6. However, the change to a synonymous adjective here probably signals for Matthew’s readers/hearers the end of this tightly organized triadic unit (6:1–18). Voelz calls this phenomenon “change-conclusion.” (CC)

**6:16–18** Fasting is only one of many practices that are susceptible to religious hypocrisy. Jesus does not command His disciples to discontinue acts of piety such as fasting, but to make sure that they are done to God’s glory (cf 1Co 10:31). Jesus practiced what He preached by giving generously, praying, and fasting for our salvation. • Holy Father, to You belongs all glory, praise, and honor, now and forever. May my deeds reflect Your mercy and Your glory. Amen. (TLSB)

### *Treasures in Heaven*

**19** “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **22** “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. **23** But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! **24** “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

**6:19–24** Jesus urged a right attitude toward possessions by presenting contrasting pictures of treasures, eyes, and masters. (TLSB)

Jesus continues that part of the Sermon on the Mount through which he gently invites his disciples to believe and trust that their life is lived under the Father’s care (6:1–7:6). After completing “On Piety” (6:1–18), with its triad of charity (6:1–4), prayer (6:5–15), and fasting (6:16–18), the Lord turns to a new topic, “On Possessions” (6:19–34). Three short units (6:19–21; 6:22–23; and 6:24) in this passage lead up to and provide the grounding for the teaching (6:25–34) in which Jesus winsomely turns his disciples away from worry over matters of earthly,

physical needs and turns them toward the Father in heaven and his loving provision. (CC)

The three short teachings in 6:19–24 warn against the idolatrous seduction of possessions. Yet consider the remarkable circumstances. As far as we can tell, most of Jesus’ disciples did not come from wealthy circumstances. Moreover, the crowds who are also listening in on Jesus’ teaching to his disciples (and who, perhaps, are in the process of becoming his disciples through the power of his teaching with authority [see 7:29]) are comprised largely of poor Palestinian farmers, peasants, and tradesmen. Nevertheless, despite the poverty (especially by modern standards) of Jesus’ original audience, so universal is the lure of possessions that even those who do not have many still must be warned and taught not to assign them too high a priority in their lives! How much more, then, do Jesus’ modern disciples who *are* wealthy by every historical standard need to know how not to set their hearts on god-Mammon! (CC)

**6:19 STORE UP...TREASURES** – μή θησαυρίζετε ὑμῖν ... θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν— The present stem imperative θησαυρίζετε, which is repeated at the start of both 6:19 (where it is negated by μή) and 6:20, indicates that the Sermon has turned to a new topic, from piety (6:1–18) to possessions (6:19–34). See the first textual note on 6:1 regarding the significance of the present stem imperatives in 6:1–7:6. In place of the personal pronoun ὑμῖν (“for you”) in 6:19–20, one might expect the reflexive pronoun σεαυτοῖς, “for yourselves.” (CC)

The present imperative repeated negatively in 6:19 (“Do not treasure ...”) and positively in 6:20 (“Treasure ...”) signals both the beginning of a new section in the Sermon and the urgency of his teaching. It is the utmost folly to spend your days with the goal of accumulating fine clothing or quantities of food stuffs. These things are found and accumulated as “treasures *on the earth*” (6:19), that is, in the place where corruption, destruction, and thievery routinely and inevitably take place. The earth, as Jesus has already taught, needs salting (5:13); it is the place where God’s name is not yet being hallowed, his reign has not yet fully come, and his will is not yet fully being done (6:9c–10). Rather than devoting their lives to such “wealth,” the disciples of Jesus should intentionally and deliberately “seek the things that are above” (Col 3:1), that is, seek the reign, the royal deeds and saving righteousness, of God, which has already come to the earth in Jesus (6:33). (CC)

*moth and rust.* Representative of all agents and processes that destroy worldly possessions. (CSB)

**6:20 TREASURES IN HEAVEN** – Eternal rewards are free and cannot be taken away. (TLSB)

**6:21 HEART WILL BE** – This is the center of one’s personality, including the mind, emotions, and will. The heart will dwell on whatever a person treasures most. (TLSB)

ὅπου γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ θησαυρός σου, ἐκεῖ ἔσται καὶ ἡ καρδία σου—The logic of this statement is similar to that of a conditional sentence in which the protasis (the “if” clause) gives the *evidence* that shows the truth of the apodosis (the “then” clause). Examples of such conditional sentences are in 6:22-23 (see the next textual note) and 12:28: “If I am, in the Spirit of God, casting out demons, then [that is evidence that] the reign of God has come upon you.” This is an important point, since we might too quickly assume that the protasis of conditionals always gives the *cause* of the apodosis as in 4:3: “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” Thus the place “where your treasure is” (similar to a protasis) is the evidence that shows where “your heart” is. The fact that someone chooses to store up earthly treasures as his priority is the *evidence* that his heart is set upon mere earthly things. (CC)

Why is it so urgent for the disciples to begin now to treasure up true treasure? Mt 6:21 explains (γάρ, “for ...”) and removes all excuses, all pretenses or delusions that “paying too much attention to possessions really will not hurt me.” Jesus explains, “For where your *treasure* is, there your *heart* also will be.” The external choices reveal the internal spiritual condition. It is to no avail for me to insist that my heart is oriented rightly, even though it may look as though I am investing my life and energy in treasure that will rot and fail. The tree is known by its fruit (7:16–19; 12:33). The evidence that a man is bent on accumulating earthly treasure supports this conclusion: “That man’s heart is set on the wrong things.” (CC)

Jesus does not give some sort of objective standard or means of evaluating, “How am I doing as a disciple?” He simply exhorts with authority. Several practical applications are possible. (CC)

First, every believer must reckon with this danger of the worship of mammon. No one, rich or poor, is immune; no one. (CC)

Second, all Christians are subject to the “law of diminishing returns.” That is to say, the “luxuries” we yearn to acquire tend to become, once we have them, “necessities” that we no longer can live without. We imagine that if we obtain certain things, then we will be satisfied, but when we get them and still feel empty, our greed grows larger still. Our desire for things naturally increases, given the fallen state of the creation and of our own insatiable sinful nature, which persists throughout earthly life, even after we have become the followers of Jesus (Romans 7). (CC)

Third, it inevitably and spiritually follows, then, that when a believer hears Jesus’ call not to treasure up treasures on earth, he should at all times assume that, in

fact, this sin has been present in his life and that he has need for repentance and renewal. He need not question whether he has committed this sin, nor should he offer any excuses for it. To modify Luther a bit, just put your hand in your shirt and see if you are still flesh and blood. If you are, you have need for repentance and growth and change. In the spirit of Jesus' exhortation, a positive indication that you are not unduly treasuring up things on earth may be the extent to which you are free to give up your money and possessions for the good of the neighbor and for the church's mission to spread the Gospel. (CC)

Fourth, we may ask what it means to "treasure for yourselves treasures in heaven" (6:20). The key is, once again, the logic of Jesus' words "For where your treasure is, there your heart also will be" (6:21). It would be a grave mistake to think that our response to the Lord's teaching should be, in the *first* place, to orient our goals and priorities away from possessions and toward love of the neighbor. That is not the first thing, nor is it the core of Jesus' teaching. The primary response is to turn and believe again that the heart of the Christian is founded upon Christ, upon the life he gives and the identity he bestows. That is where the believer's heart is fixed. When the heart is thus focused on Christ and his promises and his word, then priorities change and our freedom to choose what really matters, rather than mere earthly possessions, is evidence of faith in Jesus. Thus certain of our relationship with the Father through the Son, we can spend our lives on things that matter and store up treasures in heaven. (CC)

**6:22-23** Jesus' teaching switches to a different metaphor, but the subject remains the same, namely, his authoritative revelation concerning the disciples' proper relationship with possessions. The general import of what Jesus teaches in 6:22–23 is clear enough, but the precise force of his metaphorical language is much debated. (CC)

Jesus' opening words, "The lamp of the body [ὁ λύχνος τοῦ σώματος] is the eye," immediately pose a question that needs to be answered. The force of the genitive has to be determined for Matthew's readers/hearers to understand the emphasis of the teaching. Two possibilities present themselves most forcefully. Does the eye, like a lamp, shine light into the body (objective genitive)? Or is the eye "the body's lamp" in the sense that it shines outward, and where and how the eye "looks" directs the body where to go (possessive genitive)? In the overall biblical usage of λύχνος, "lamp," followed by a genitive modifier, the possessive genitive meaning is dominant, but the objective genitive meaning occurs once elsewhere. (CC)

Allison has persuasively argued the case in favor of the possessive genitive also here: "The body's lamp is the eye." He shows that various ancient societies, including the Jewish context leading up to the time of Jesus' own ministry, generally regarded the eyes as *shining*, as a *source* of light that shines out from the body. Allison cites Dan 10:6, where Daniel sees a glorious figure whose eyes were "like flaming torches" (LXX ὡσεὶ λαμπάδες πυρός), and Zech 4:10,

where “the eyes of the LORD” are said to be the “seven [lamps]” of the “golden lampstand” in Zech 4:2 (LXX: λυχνία χρυσοῦ). One can also cite Rev 1:14, where the eyes of the glorified Christ are “like a flame of fire” (ὡς φλόξ πυρός). (CC)

The image of the eyes giving light is also expressed in non-canonical Jewish literature. Allison cites *1 Enoch* 106:2 as an example. The author is describing the child Noah when he was newborn, and writes: “As for his eyes, when he opened them the whole house glowed like the sun.” This legendary account takes for granted the view that light comes out from the eyes. (CC)

Given this understanding in the historical background, the picture in Jesus’ words, which could very well be a known proverb, is that the whole body turns its “lamp”—the eye—here or there, to shine light on what is important and to make choices as to where the body should go. (CC)

Jesus draws, in the form of two contrasting conditional sentences (6:22b–23b), an inference (οὖν) from this picture of the eye as the body’s lamp. As suggested immediately above, the metaphor almost certainly involves the idea of light coming out from the “lamp,” which is the eye. It follows that like the statement in 6:21, the protasis (“if” clause) gives the evidence that the apodosis (“then” clause) is in fact true. So Jesus’ teaching can be paraphrased, “If your eye is healthy/generous, that is because your whole body is full of light and is spiritually sound. But if your eye is diseased/greedy, that is because your whole body is full of darkness and is spiritually unsound.” As Jesus teaches in other places, the external choices are evidence that tell the tale of the internal spiritual condition (trees and fruit in 7:16–19; 12:33). It is the inner condition of evil that manifests itself in various kinds of sin—whether it be through the eye (as here) or through the mouth (15:15–20). Jesus’ paradoxical final statement in 6:23 follows logically as an exclamation, a warning, and a call to self-examination. It could be paraphrased thus: “If, therefore, the light in you is darkness—that is, you are not filled with light, but with darkness, which causes you to have a wicked (diseased/greedy) eye—how great is that darkness!” The greedy, stingy actions each of us must confess reveal a great spiritual darkness within ourselves. (CC)

In context, 6:22–23 expands on Jesus’ admonition to his disciples that they should not treasure their possessions or worldly wealth. People whose “lamp” is ever focused on such things are giving evidence about the kind of “light”—really “darkness”—that is within them, since where the body’s lamp shines shows what is within a person. Thus 6:22–23 reinforces the teaching of 6:19–21. Mt 6:22–23 may also express a growing sternness in Jesus’ exhortation, as evidenced by the exclamatory ending: “If the light in you is darkness—how great the darkness!” (CC)

Jesus teaches about possessions as one who claims authority (7:29). His disciples acknowledge his authority, receive his teaching, and seek with his aid to ever prioritize their lives rightly with respect to material possessions. Ironically,

there will be many times when a believer's emphasis on wealth will be revealed for what it is: spiritual poverty! Then, in repentance, we may return to the one who welcomes and blesses the poor in spirit (5:3) and begin again our lives in him. (CC)

**6:22 EYE IS THE LAMP** – In Jesus' day, people believed that light shone out from the body through the eye. Note from Job 17:7: Physicians in ancient times believed that the eye had a source of light within it, perhaps because of the way the eye reflects light outward. Job is further distressed over the deterioration of his body. His eyes are so dim that objects flit before them like shadows.) (TLSB)

**EYES ARE GOOD** – This refers to spiritual health producing a “bountiful eye” (Pr. 22:9). (TLSB)

**FULL OF LIGHT** – Such an eye means the whole person is healthy and generous. Hus: “[His work] is pure from the standpoint of a holy purpose” (*The Church*, p 224). (TLSB)

**6:23 EYES ARE BAD** – This is a morally bad eye and is stingy. Such a person may see physically but it in total spiritual darkness. (TLSB)

**6:24 HATE...LOVE** – μισήσει ... αγαπήσει ... ἀνθέξεται ... καταφρονήσει—All four of these verbs are future indicatives. Wallace notes the rare use of “gnomic” futures to describe phenomena that are “true to life.” One would expect, perhaps, simple present indicatives in the Greek, but the Greek futures are appropriate in English too: “he will hate ... love ... cling ...despise.” (CC)

**YOUR MASTER** – This final short segment in the series of three (6:19–21; 6:22–23; and 6:24) portrays the issue of possessions starkly for Jesus' disciples. Slavery was a common institution in the ancient world, including the Roman Empire. The NT epistles (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 6:5–9; Col 3:22–4:1; 1 Tim 6:1–2; Philemon 16) as well as early church writings show that many of the first Christians were slaves. So Jesus' original audience would have been fully cognizant of the truth he articulates here: no one can be a slave to two masters. A slave is duty-bound to serve his one master with all of his time, strength, and ability, so it would be impossible for a slave to split his loyalty between two masters. That was common knowledge; no one can argue with such a statement (6:24a). The explanation that follows (γάρ, “for ...” 6:24b–c) shows why this is true. The slave will end up adhering to only one master, and he will reject and despise the other. (CC)

The final clause of the verse (6:24d) completes Jesus' escalating teaching on possessions and sets the stage for the problem's solution, which he offers in 6:25–34. “Where your treasure is, there your heart also will be” (6:21). “If, therefore, the light in you is darkness—how great the darkness!” (6:23). *You are not able to be a slave to God and to mammon* (6:24). (CC)

Those words strike like the hammer on the conscience of every believer, for at all times there is need for us to examine our priorities, discern again how we have fallen short of the Lord Jesus' calling for our lives, and turn to him and be forgiven. Jesus is also issuing divine revelation to instruct and guide his followers. When faced with choices and priorities, Jesus' words are simply and powerfully true: you cannot be a slave to God and to mammon. Functioning as guide and teacher, Jesus' word brings clarity. (CC)

Moreover, Jesus himself, the gracious and forgiving Master, who perfectly served the Father and the Father alone (4:10) in order to save his people from their sins (1:21), will empower his disciples to live as those who are slaves to God. At all times, Matthew's readers must remember who is speaking these challenging words to whom: Jesus, the perfect Servant of the LORD and Son for us, speaks to his disciples, whom he has called. Christ himself enables our obedience. When we as Jesus' disciples stumble into sin, however, he himself will forgive and raise us up to begin anew. (CC)

Jesus portrayed both God and money as slave owners. Obviously a slave has only one master. (TLSB)

**6:19–24** Humans everywhere, whether rich or poor, are prone to collecting earthly treasures. Yet, only heavenly treasures are eternal. As children of light, God calls us to be generous with our possessions and to serve God as our master rather than live as slaves to possessions. For our sake, Christ became the servant of all—to save all—by bearing all of our sins and granting us rich, surpassing, eternal forgiveness. • Heavenly Father, lead me to “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Col 3:1). Amen. (TLSB)

### *Do Not Worry*

**<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup> Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life<sup>a</sup>? <sup>28</sup> “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore**

**do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**

**6:25-34** Jesus' teaching in 6:25–34 follows directly upon—and indeed is logically connected to—the revelation about treasures and the Master in 6:19–24, as shown by the inferential “on account of this” that starts 6:25. Since the proper attitude toward earthly possessions is to understand that there can only be one master in the life of Jesus' disciples (6:24), the invitation to be free from worry naturally and inevitably follows. When food and clothing are one's masters, the inevitable slavery is to *worry* whether there will be enough of these things that are necessary for life. When, however, you serve the Father in heaven because of the Son who came to the earth, there can be an entirely different “take” on the food and the clothing that are part and parcel of what it means to be a human creature. (CC)

Before taking up the structure and teaching of 6:25–34, three introductory comments are appropriate. In the first place, Jesus is here teaching about the *necessities* of life. There seems to be a universal human tendency to redefine luxuries as mere wants and then mere wants as genuine needs. Jesus of Nazareth does not preach a “prosperity gospel.” He proclaims that our Father in heaven knows that we *need* things such as food and clothing (6:32b) and that he will provide for those whom he treasures far more than birds and lilies (6:26–30). Most (though not all) North American Christians have far more than they *need*. Though it would be a great blow to us and a spiritual challenge of the first order, God could see fit to strip us of the vast majority of our earthly possessions of clothing, food, and shelter, and we would still be able to acknowledge him as the good God who provides richly for *all* our needs for this life and the life to come. (CC)

Second, Jesus' teaching in 6:25–34 is not a guarantee that his disciples will never be in situations of extreme physical need. Jesus' teaching here has a general proverbial character, as shown by the appeal to the birds of the sky and the lilies of the field. Jesus' disciples, both then and now, have all seen birds starving or being devoured by predators or lilies drying up in the heat of drought. The mysteries of God's ways with a fallen creation involve “natural” disasters, wars, and especially the persecution of Jesus' disciples by those who hate the Lord. Indeed, those most specially designated by Jesus as his missionary disciples have every reason to believe that they may find themselves in situations of physical deprivation and need (see the commentary on 25:31–46). Nevertheless, the invitation to be free from worry flows from the truth that Jesus' disciples are royal servants of the Father, and of the Son and Spirit as well. Their triune God will see fit to provide what they need. (CC)

Third, there are (at least) two valid ways to deal with the universal human tendency to worry, which plagues also the disciples of Jesus and drains away their time and energy. First, at times worry simply should be rebuked and then



confessed as the sin that it is. The sinner then turns from his worry, confesses his sin, and receives God's forgiveness and strength to begin anew. (CC)

However, that is not the tack that Jesus takes in 6:25–34. Rather, the structure of the pericope reveals a second approach to worry. Through a series of gentle, rhetorical questions, Jesus invites his disciples to remember that they are living their lives *under the Father's care*. We should not overlook the whimsy evoked by the pictures of birds working the fields to gain a harvest stored in barns and of flowers sitting at looms, spinning cloth to wear. Such absurdity is an effective device to break through our human defenses and drive home the point. Through his inexorable spiritual logic, Jesus turns his disciples away from the worry that plagues those who serve the god Mammon and to their true focus and source of strength: the reign of God and his righteousness, which has come into their world in Jesus himself (6:33). To that structure and rhetoric we shall now turn. (CC)

### **The Antidote to Worry: Seeking the Reign of God and His Righteousness**

The material in 6:25–34 is bracketed by two present imperatives, which are emphatic: the first is the negative prohibition “Do not indeed worry” (μὴ μεριμνᾶτε, 6:25), and the second is the positive invitation and exhortation “First seek indeed [ζητεῖτε] the reign [of God] and his righteousness” (6:33). Surrounding the second present imperative is the repeated prohibition “Do not worry,” expressed by the aorist subjunctive (μὴ ... μεριμνήσητε) in 6:31, 34, whose concluding repetition (6:34) completes the pericope. Most of the pericope is an expansion of 6:25: “Do not indeed worry about your life.” Jesus mentions both the concern for food and drink and the need for adequate clothing. He then asks the questions to which a positive answer is required both by the Greek vocabulary (οὐχί) and by theology: “Life is something more than food and the body [is something more] than clothing, aren't they?” (6:25). Jesus' disciples can say nothing other than, “Of course!” Then 6:26–27 deals with the issue of food, while 6:28–30 speaks to clothing. Mt 6:31–32 summarizes and repeats the exhortation for how *not* to orient one's existence, and the present imperative “Seek” in 6:33 offers the positive alternative. (CC)

The primary rhetorical feature of the unit is the fivefold use of questions. Two of them necessarily expect a positive answer because they begin with forms of οὐ, “Is/are not ...?” (οὐχί in 6:25 and οὐχ in 6:26). The first such question, in 6:25, has already been discussed. The second such question flows from the Father's abundant provisions for mere birds: “*You* are worth much more than they, aren't you?” (6:26). One can almost hear the reluctant, somewhat embarrassed concession from the lips of Jesus' original disciples, and also from our lips: “Well, yes, now that you put it that way, Lord.” Jesus presses the issue of worry by reminding us that the duration of our lives is up to God, and no amount of worry can add to our lifespan (cf. Psalm 90): “And who of you by worrying is able to add to his journey of days one cubit?” (6:27). Again the slow response: “Well, Master, I guess that no one can do such a thing after all.” The fourth and fifth questions

address the need for adequate clothing: “Why are you worrying? After decking out the transient lilies of the field in hyper-Solomonic splendor, by much more God will clothe you, you little-faiths, will he not?” (6:28–30; for “little-faiths,” see the second textual note on 6:30). With dawning comprehension, disciples reply, “Yes. Yes, he *will* do that.” When Jesus’ exhortation returns, “Therefore, do not worry” (6:31), his teaching has brought clarity: “I lost my bearings; I have been someone of little faith. I forgot that God was my heavenly Father and that he knows that I have these needs and that he will indeed provide for them.” (CC)

Jesus does not stop with drawing his disciples away from worry over bodily needs. More importantly, he reorients them to the reality from which they draw their identity and blessing and purpose in the first place, and in so doing, Jesus brings to a close his teaching “Life under the Father’s Care: On Possessions” (6:19–34). The reign of God with its blessings and calling have already come into the world in Jesus, the Son of God and Savior (5:3–16). As he declared to John the Baptizer, his mission is to enact God’s righteous deeds of salvation, “to fulfill all righteousness” (3:15). Jesus’ disciples have been called out of serving the god Mammon (6:24), away from worry over the necessities of life. Jesus’ invitation “First seek indeed the reign [of God] and his righteousness” (6:33) is simply another way of saying, “Receive the blessing and calling that Jesus has already brought into the world, and keep looking for the consummation of that reign. Seek Jesus and what he is doing and bringing into the world.” The other needful things will be added to those whom the Father values far more than birds and flowers. (CC)

What might this mean in practical terms today, this invitation to “first seek indeed the reign [of God] and his righteousness?” It means to go to the places where Jesus is reigning with his gracious presence, to receive his gifts of forgiveness and righteousness, to learn his truth, and to respond to his call.<sup>15</sup> Jesus’ invitation is holistic. To seek the reign of God is to seek the Gospel, which comes to us in the Scriptures and the Sacraments. In seeking that Gospel, we will also experience the sustaining community of fellow disciples, who are our brothers and sisters. With them we are joined to Christ in Holy Baptism, and with them we gather to hear God’s Word and receive our Lord’s Supper. In those places God’s saving righteousness is found; there God is at work forgiving and making things right. That is what life is for; here is the purpose and goal of the body. Jesus is drawing, wooing, and inviting his disciples thus to orient their lives and so to be free from worry over life’s other needs. The Father will supply those needs as well (6:33b). (CC)

As Jesus says in his concluding proverb (6:34), each day has enough trouble of its own, so why borrow more by worrying about the next day? As Jesus’ disciples, we have one Master (6:24). When the Word of Jesus teaches us again who the Master is—the heavenly Father of Jesus, the Savior—that Word will empower us to walk in the ways that Jesus has here revealed with authority. And possessions, which would ever seek to become our master, god, and curse, are

no longer anything but daily bread (6:11) that the Father, working through means, will provide, so that we may live, move, and seek the reign of God in Jesus. (CC)

**6:25** *Therefore.* Conclusion to be drawn from vv 19–24. (TLSB)

DO NOT WORRY – μή μεριμνᾶτε τῇ ψυχῇ ὑμῶν—The present imperative is emphatic, and it introduces a new section, namely, the conclusion to be drawn from 6:19–24. The first textual note on 6:1 discusses the significance of the present imperatives in 6:1–7:6. The noun ψυχῇ, “life,” is probably a dative of respect, so the clause is, literally, “Do not worry with respect to your life.” Although the noun ψυχή in Matthew can refer to “soul” as opposed to “body” (10:28), much more often (thirteen times) it refers holistically to one’s self or one’s whole being. Perhaps most importantly, the Son of Man gives his ψυχή as the ransom payment (20:28), and that is indeed his entire self (cf. Jn 10:11)! (CC)

Worry, dread, and fear. (TLSB)

The German word for worry means “to strangle.” The Greek word means “to divide the mind.” Both are accurate. Worry is a noose on the neck and a distraction of the mind, neither of which is befitting for joy. (When God Whispers Your Name – Max Lucado p. 134)

If you chase two rabbits, both will escape. Animal trainers carry a stool when they go into a cage of lions. Those who know, maintain that the animal tries to focus on all four spokes at once. When it does so, a kind of paralysis overwhelms the animal, and it becomes weak and disabled because its attention is fragmented. (John Maxwell)

Sunday dinner is a complicated production in our family. My mother hovers over the stove, never daring to step away. If she leaves the food unattended, she knows it will burn.

God is even more intimately involved in His creation. He did not make the world on a whim, only to let it play out on its own in the distance. He lovingly upholds all creation—even small birds and tiny wildflowers—providing everything it needs day by day. His loving hand guides history for His purpose. From the beginning, God has been fulfilling His plan for the world. His work of salvation and grace through Jesus is not plan B, but was and is God’s good and gracious will for us from the start.

The reformer Martin Luther explains God the Father’s work, in part, this way: “He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life” (Luther’s Small Catechism, p. 15). This is true even when we fail to recognize and thank God for His gifts. God sends rain on the just and on the unjust alike. Mercifully, He even sends salvation to sinners like us. Meyer Minute

We fear recession, loss of job, a falling dollar, increased taxes, and host of other possible threats to our security. Clothing and food concern us, along with savings balance, insurance policies, stock market investments, and the cost of educating our children. We scratch our heads every payday as we pay bills and try to balance the checkbook. In our church we worry about whether bills will be paid and how much we can afford to give for missions. (LL)

When I hear these words I think of the song, “Be Happy, Don’t Worry.” The title words were repeated a great deal and there was little substance to the ditty. The song offered little or nothing as far assistance for a person not to worry. Needless to say it didn’t reach any heights on the music charts nor did it stay around very long.

A picture that song brings into my mind is the cover of an Alfred Newman comic book. Sketched there is a boy who has protruding ears, a gapped tooth smile, lots of freckles around his nose and a spacey look in his eyes. It appears that he hasn’t a care in the world. You also get the feeling that he hasn’t got all of the parts he needs to live a normal life.

The last two paragraphs reveal how little we have to offer in regard to our ability not to worry. In the succeeding verses God again and again urges us not to worry. Then He tells us why we need not worry.

IS NOT LIFE MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOOD – τί φάγητε [ἢ τί πίνητε] ... τί ἐνδύσησθε—The Greek of what Jesus’ hearers were directly asking within themselves would be normal first person plural deliberative subjunctives: τί φάγωμεν, “What shall we eat?” τί πίνωμεν, “What shall we drink?” and τί ἐνδύσωμεν, “What shall we put on?” Jesus’ words here reflect the questions in his hearers’ minds so that he can answer those questions. All such deliberative questions, whether real or rhetorical in force, are expressed in either the subjunctive (as here) or the future indicative. (CC)

The first of five rhetorical questions that compare or contrast greater and lesser things. This was a typical teaching method of the rabbis. (TLSB)

God’s first argument compares the greater to the lesser. If God has given you life, which is far greater than any material possessions, will He not provide you with the lesser gifts of food, drink, clothing and shelter? Would it make any sense at all for God to give life and then be unconcerned about sustaining that life? The obvious answer is No. (PBC)

**6:26** BIRDS OF THE AIR – Luther pictures birds as live saints singing praises without worry. (Lenski)

Luther: “He is making the birds our schoolmaster and teachers. It is a great and abiding disgrace to us that in the Gospel a helpless sparrow should become a theologian and preacher.” [AE 21:197]. (TLSB)

*more value.* This second question compares the lesser to the greater. (TLSB)

FATHER FEEDS THEM – καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τρέφει αὐτά—  
Given the contrast between the content of the preceding clauses in 6:26 and this one linked to them by καί, the translation “and yet your heavenly Father feeds them” is appropriate. (CC)

Now Jesus compares the lesser to the greater. If God provides for the needs of the birds of the air, who don’t even sow or reap or store up food in barns, will He not provide for your needs? You have the advantage of being far more valuable in God’s sight. He created you with an immortal soul. Can you imagine that He will be less concerned about you than about the birds? (LL)

MORE VALUABLE – οὐχ ὑμεῖς μᾶλλον διαφέρετε αὐτῶν;—The emphatic pronoun ὑμεῖς underscores Jesus’ point, and so it is italicized in the translation: “*You* are worth much more than they, aren’t you?” The contrast stands between what mere birds are to the Father and how greatly the Father values Jesus’ disciples. (CC)

And God is very concerned about birds. Matthew 10:29 says, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?” yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of you Father.” Then verses 30 and 31 do the lesser to the greater comparison when they state, “And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

**6:27** ADD A SINGLE HOUR – προσθεῖναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ πῆχυν ἓνα;—  
This expression is difficult. BDAG, s.v. πῆχυς, notes the two major lines of interpretation. ἡλικία usually means “age, stage of life,” though occasionally it means “bodily stature, a person’s height.” Elsewhere πῆχυς usually means “cubit,” that is, the distance from the elbow to the fingertips (about eighteen inches). (CC)

One common view understands both ἡλικία and πῆχυς as referring to physical distance and renders Jesus’ words as hyperbole: “Who of you by worrying is able to add eighteen inches to his height?” Yet since Jesus’ point is that worry achieves *nothing*, we should expect ἓνα πῆχυς to be something that is unattainable by means of worry even though it is relatively *small*. “One cubit” would be a large addition to a person’s height. That makes this line of interpretation unlikely. Denying the ability to add eighteen inches to one’s height fails to convey the point that worry is not even able to effect the *smallest* change. (CC)

The other common view takes ἡλικία and πῆχυς as referring to time. If ἡλικία has its usual meaning, “age, time of life,” then πῆχυς must refer to a relatively small unit of time, such as an “hour” or a “moment,” even though this term does not have such a temporal meaning elsewhere. Then the clause comes to mean “Who of you by worrying is able to add a moment to his lifespan?” (CC)

A somewhat different solution is for ἡλικία here to have the temporal meaning of age as it progresses during life, viewing life as a long-distance journey, while πῆχυς has its normal meaning as a “cubit,” a unit of distance. Then eighteen inches is a short, tiny extension to the distance of one’s entire lifetime, pictured as a “journey of days.” Hence my translation is “to add to his journey of days one cubit?” (CC)

Worry usually cuts down on the length of life and certainly on the quality of life. From “Sermon Illustrations” we see some examples: Worry is fear's extravagance. It extracts interest on trouble before it comes due. It constantly drains the energy God gives us to face daily problems and to fulfill our many responsibilities. It is therefore a sinful waste. A woman who had lived long enough to have learned some important truths about life remarked, "I've had a lot of trouble -- most of which never happened!" She had worried about many things that had never occurred, and had come to see the total futility of her anxieties. [Source Unknown.](#)

The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety. George Muller Massena, one of Napoleon's generals, suddenly appeared with 18,000 soldiers before an Austrian town which had no means of defending itself. The town council met, certain that capitulation was the only answer. The old dean of the church reminded the council that it was Easter, and begged them to hold services as usual and to leave the trouble in God's hands. They followed his advice. The dean went to the church and rang the bells to announce the service. The French soldiers heard the church bells ring and concluded that the Austrian army had come to rescue the town. They broke camp, and before the bells had ceased ringing, vanished. [Source Unknown.](#)

For several years a woman had been having trouble getting to sleep at night because she feared burglars. One night her husband heard a noise in the house, so he went downstairs to investigate. When he got there, he did find a burglar. "Good evening," said the man of the house. "I am pleased to see you. Come upstairs and meet my wife. She has been waiting 10 years to meet you." [William Marshall, \*Eternity Shut in a Span.\*](#)

Every evening I turn worries over to God. He's going to be up all night anyway. [Mary C. Crowley, \*Be Somebody.\*](#)

Worry pulls tomorrow's cloud over today's sunshine.

Worry is wasting today's time to clutter up tomorrow's opportunities with yesterday's troubles. [Source Unknown](#).

An average person's anxiety is focused on:

- 40% -- things that will never happen
- 30% -- things about the past that can't be changed
- 12% -- things about criticism by others, mostly untrue
- 10% about health, which gets worse with stress
- 8% -- about real problems that will be faced

[Source Unknown](#).

**6:28** *lilies*. Here represents flowers generally. (CSB)

καταμάθετε τὰ κρίνα τοῦ ἀγροῦ πῶς αὐξάνουσιν—For emphasis the subject (τὰ κρίνα, “the lilies”) of the interrogative clause headed by “how” (πῶς αὐξάνουσιν, “how they grow”) actually stands in front of the interrogative clause, which would normally begin with πῶς. This is termed “prolepsis” of the subject (BDF, § 476.2). Following the Greek word order, the sentence reads, “Learn well the lilies of the field, how they grow,” but the meaning is “Learn well how the lilies of the field grow.” (CC)

The lilies of the field do not labor or spin; yet God dresses them in finery that even Solomon in all his splendor could not rival. We can “labor or spin.” We have that advantage over lilies. So why should we worry about having the necessary clothing? (PBC)

**6:29** *Solomon*. Israelite king known for his splendor. (TLSB)

**6:30** *thrown into the fire*. Grass was commonly used to heat the clay ovens of Palestine. (CSB)

Grass was used for fuel. (TLSB)

εἰ δὲ τὸν χόρτον τοῦ ἀγροῦ σήμερον ὄντα καὶ αὔριον εἰς κλίβανον βαλλόμενον—The referent of the predicate position participles ὄντα (“exists”) and βαλλόμενον (“thrown”) is τὸν χόρτον, “grass.” The participles are taken concessively (“*even though* it exists today and tomorrow is thrown ...”) because they contrast strongly with the preceding context (“God thus clothes the grass”). Solomon was glorious, but God more gloriously arrays the grass of the field, even though it lasts only a day and is destined for burning. How much more precious to the Father are Jesus’ disciples! (CC)

The grass of the field was used as fuel for cooking in areas where firewood was scarce. It was here to day and gone tomorrow, and yet God also made grassy



fields a thing of beauty. Can we imagine that God has less concern for us? Impossible! (PBC)

**OF LITTLE FAITH – ὀλιγόπιστοι**—Matthew employs the compound adjective ὀλιγόπιστος, “having little faith,” in the plural as a substantive, “little-faiths,” that is, “people with little faith,” in 6:30; 8:26; 16:8, and in the singular in 14:31. Elsewhere in the NT the term occurs only in Lk 12:28, the parallel to Mt 6:30. Matthew also uses the compound noun ὀλιγοπιστία, “littleness of faith,” in 17:20. Significantly, both terms in Matthew always refer to Jesus’ disciples as those who have little faith; their faith may be small, but they still *do have faith* in Jesus, else they would not be his disciples. (CC)

Those who worry about food, drink, and clothing (as well as other things) show little faith in the heavenly Father’s providential care. Jesus also refers to great faith (cf 15:28). Paul describes faith organically, as “growing. (TLSB)

**6:31** *Therefore.* Jesus concluded His argument by repeating elements of v 25. (TLSB)

**DO NOT WORRY – See verse 25.**

μη οὖν μεριμνήσητε—The inferential particle οὖν is important. Jesus’ gently inexorable logic reaches its conclusion in 6:31–33. Because of the wonderfully inescapable logic of all that has preceded, “Therefore, do not worry.” (CC)

**6:32** **PAGANS RUN AFTER – πάντα γὰρ ταῦτα τὰ ἔθνη ἐπιζητοῦσιν**—This first γὰρ clause is a grounding statement for the main verb at the start of 6:31, “Do not worry.” Why should Jesus’ disciples not worry about clothing and food? First, because that is what unbelievers do: “For the Gentiles seek all these things” (6:32a). (CC)

They did not believe in a generous, loving Creator. (TLSB)

**FATHER KNOWS...NEED THEM – οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος ὅτι χρῆζετε τούτων ἀπάντων**—This second γὰρ clause seems a bit awkward. I take it to be a second grounding statement for the main verb at the start of 6:31, “Do not worry.” The second reason why Jesus’ disciples should not worry about clothing and food is because “your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (6:32b). (CC)

**6:33** **SEEK – ζητεῖτε**—The present imperative here (“Seek indeed”) is the emphatic positive counterpart of the present stem prohibition “Do not indeed worry” in 6:25. Unlike most of the other present stem imperatives in 6:1–7:6, it does not stand at the beginning of a new section of material (see the first textual note on 6:1). Nevertheless, it is emphatic (“Seek *indeed*”) because it contrasts with the prohibition that uses μη plus the aorist subjunctive, μη ... μεριμνήσητε



“Do not worry”), which is repeated before (6:31) and after (6:34) this imperative (ζητεῖτε, 6:33). (CC)

FIRST HIS KINGDOM – πρῶτον τὴν βασιλείαν [τοῦ θεοῦ]—Even should τοῦ θεοῦ be omitted here, it is obvious that the “reign” is God’s (see especially 4:17; 6:10). It is extremely easy to imagine early scribes accidentally (and instinctively) adding “of God” (τοῦ θεοῦ) to the noun βασιλεία. On the other hand, there are no reasons, either transcriptional or otherwise, that can account for the omission of τοῦ θεοῦ from a longer original text. For the rendition of βασιλεία as “reign,” see “The Reign of Heaven/God in Jesus” in “Matthew’s Intention” in the introduction. The neuter of the adjective πρῶτος serves as an adverb, “first.” It can mean “in the first place” (BDAG, s.v. πρῶτος, 1 a β) and be followed by “second,” and so forth. If it had that meaning here, Jesus would be saying that his disciples should seek the reign of God first and then they should seek food, clothing, and so on. But in this context, the adverb has a kind of superlative degree: “above all” (BDAG, s.v. πρῶτος, 2 b) or “first to the exclusion of all others.” Just as Jesus’ disciples can have only one master (6:24), so too they are to seek only one thing: the reign of God. Davies and Allison survey the possible meanings of “first seek indeed the reign [of God].” They conclude that since the reign is already present in Jesus himself, 6:33 means that “one should make it his first concern to belong to it in the here and now, to come into its sphere of working.” (CC)

What might this mean in practical terms today, this invitation to “first seek indeed the reign [of God] and his righteousness?” It means to go to the places where Jesus is reigning with his gracious presence, to receive his gifts of forgiveness and righteousness, to learn his truth, and to respond to his call. Jesus’ invitation is holistic. To seek the reign of God is to seek the Gospel, which comes to us in the Scriptures and the Sacraments. In seeking that Gospel, we will also experience the sustaining community of fellow disciples, who are our brothers and sisters. With them we are joined to Christ in Holy Baptism, and with them we gather to hear God’s Word and receive our Lord’s Supper. In those places God’s saving righteousness is found; there God is at work forgiving and making things right. That is what life is for; here is the purpose and goal of the body. Jesus is drawing, wooing, and inviting his disciples thus to orient their lives and so to be free from worry over life’s other needs. The Father will supply those needs as well (6:33b). (CC)

Desire above all to live under the rule of the one true God (cf 3:2; 4:17). (TLSB)

The word first means foremost. It could easily be translated only. If one thinks of first as one among many, God’s kingdom gets segments along with competing values. But serving only one master and seeking only one kingdom means that God permeates every aspect of life. Jesus, who calls us into His kingdom by His righteousness, also promises to supply all our needs on a daily basis. Therefore, we need not worry tomorrow. (LL)

*righteousness.* God’s righteousness, or His salvation (cf 5:6). (TLSB)

ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE GIVEN – Jesus again compared the greater to the lesser blessing (cf Rm 8:32). (TLSB)

With His kingdom as our priority, all other matters will be taken care of almost automatically. God will keep His promise to provide us with food, drink, clothing and shelter. We have no right to expect Him to do this with no effort or labor on our part. Ordinarily, He provides for our needs through the normal processes of nature. He sends sunshine and rain and causes fields, forests garden, orchards, and vineyards to be productive. And He normally gives us the ability and opportunity to do useful work thus to earn our daily share of His bounty. (PBC)

Jesus does not promise us a life without troubles and consequences of sin. They keep us mindful of our sinfulness and unworthiness and of our daily need for God's gracious forgiveness for Jesus' sake. They also help us to keep our attention on the goal of our faith and to look forward to the trouble-free life in heaven that will never end. He who has provided this glorious inheritance for us is the one who tells us not to worry about the Things of this life, for He will surely bring us to that goal. (PBC)

Isaiah 50:4-5 and notes – **He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. <sup>5</sup> The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears.** It is like being awakened so one can be instructed or learn the next lesson. To make it ready for instruction. A little bit like toning a piano so that great music make come from it. God is described as supplying every day, as a necessary gift, an alert ear, keeping it sensitive to the divine teaching. As true man He remained a "learner" all His days. The student is paying attention.

1 Kings 3:9 and notes – **So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?** Literally, "a hearing heart." Hebrew verb "to hear" frequently means "to hearken, to obey" (cf 1 Sam 15:22). To act in obedience to God, Solomon wanted to be able to "discern between good and evil." Such discrimination required a mind capable of analytic judgments. However, only a heart that listens to the Lord could supply the basis for making correct decisions, the desire to conform to the divine way, and the willpower to act accordingly.

**6:34 DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW** – The concept of tomorrow brings to mind the sign I saw at a bar. It said, "Free beer tomorrow." My first thought was "How can they afford that?" Then it dawned on me, "Tomorrow is always a day away and never really gets here." There will never be any free beer.

Jesus concluded this portion of His teaching with a commonsense proverb. We would say, "Take one day at a time." (TLSB)

**6:25–34** If Jesus' words are taken literally, it seems as if He encourages irresponsibility and laziness. And is it true that all birds are adequately fed and all flowers are beautiful? As with Jesus' parables, we need to look for His central teaching here: seek God's salvation, and then entrust your daily life to His loving care. We do this by faithfully making use of the Word and Sacraments, through which the Spirit leads us to repent of our sins and to trust Jesus for forgiveness. Convinced of our salvation, we commit our daily lives into the caring hands of our heavenly Father. • Good Shepherd, because You laid down Your life for me, grant that I may trust You to provide my daily needs. Amen. (TLSB)