

The Representative's Perception of Value: Righteousness or Materials
Matthew 6:19--7:12

2. The representative of God seeks God's values (righteousness) not man's (material needs) (6:19--7:6).

The following section expands on the desires of the representative (God's glory) and the provisions of the needs for the representative to fulfill those desires. Those provisions are from God.

a. The representative of God seeks God's values (righteousness) not man's (material needs) (6:19-34).

While the representative of God is to seek God's desires (righteousness), he is to recognize that God will fulfill all his earthly needs in order to fulfill his heavenly needs.

1) The representative of God seeks God's values (righteousness) not man's (material needs) (6:19-24).

There are two contrasts in these verses. The righteousness of God (treasure in heaven) and the material things of man (treasure on earth). In verses 19-21 those contrasts are made very evident as to their value. One has none, the other is everything.

In verses 22-23, as previously in the Sermon God moves to the perception of these values. The eye, as previously (cf. 5:28-29) was the external key to the heart. In 5:28-29 it had coveted another's woman, yet the eye was the external operator of the heart. Here the eye is the perceiver of things. If the eye perceives God (the light here is revelation of God) correctly then the representative will be full of light (full of the revelation of God) and will be able to be a light (cf. 5:14).

The choices of this perception are illustrated in 5:24. Either man sees God as ultimate, or he sees his earthly things as ultimate. This was reflected in chapter 5 when the man was to cast his eye from him if it offended him. Thus the perception of material things as valuable in light of the righteousness of God is an offense to one since it will send him to hell.

6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.
20 "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;
21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
22 "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.
23 "But if your

eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!
24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

2) The representative of God is not anxious about material needs (man's values) for he recognizes that God provides for those who represent His values (righteousness) above men's values (6:25-34).

The Sermon thus will move to imperatives regarding physical things (and obviously the more important righteous things).

First, it is clear that He is speaking of more than food when He states, "Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?" Clearly Jesus is saying that God's righteousness is more important than the physical provisions.

In addition the physical things are beyond one's control, ultimately stating that one cannot determine tomorrow (6:34).

The important thing to recognize here is that as a representative of God, whom God has made for that purpose, God will provide all that is necessary for the individual to represent Him, including RIGHTEOUSNESS, which is the more important!

The essence of this is that man's concern (worry, anxiety) is regarding his physical well-being. What this is saying is that revelation is the source of one's understanding of righteousness and of material needs. Thus, it is not that one does not concern himself about going to work to earn money to pay for his family's food and clothing, but that one realizes that it is God who provides these things for the purpose of enabling the man to represent God in faith and actions as revealed.

The point is that all these things can disappear in a minute and become worthless. One is to focus on the revelation of God as valuable, then all material needs will be seen in light of that. Thus, when things get tough he realizes that God is in control of all things and does not bemoan his fate or assume that God is cursing him (as the Pharisees). Thus, when character analysis is applied here it is the Pharisees who evaluated everything through materials (as meaningful) and thus God and His action toward man was based on their perception of material wealth. Jesus says it is the other way around. Man is to perceive God through revelation and then material needs will be seen in the light of those things.

6:25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? 26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 "And which of you by being anxious can add a *single* cubit to his life's span? 28 "And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. 30 "But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more *do so for* you, O men of little faith? 31 "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' 32 "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall¹ be added to you. 34 "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. *Each* day has enough trouble of its own.

b. The representative of God must perceive from God's perception² (by which he will be ultimately judge) his own evil state, instead of with biased human perception, and then having corrected His own evil state he can then offer the same solution³ to others (7:1-5).

1) The representative of God must first judge as God judges and perceive his own wicked state in order to correct it (with an understanding of the Sermon) prior to the true judgment (7:1-5).

It is unfortunate that the chapter heading is placed where it is. Since it is, the reader tends to look at this first verse as a totally new concept. However, it is very much aligned with the warning against judging things through the material possessions first. The Pharisee had judged all (particularly his obedience) through material possessions, and thus sought after them (just as the pagans). He thus judged on that basis, not on the basis of a righteous relationship with a holy God from the point of a depraved man.

¹ Matt. 19:29 illustrates that physical things will be added in the Kingdom. However, it should be noted that the present age is also included, but that the Sovereign God will provide as needed for His representatives.

² cf. 6:24. The assessment of God and the assessment of riches (viewed by the eye) is contrary. The assessment of God is based on revelation.

³ The giving of righteousness (or forgiveness) from God through the representative (teaching) to others is paralleled in Matthew 18:18-20 where the disciples are told that "whatever they bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven." The whole chapter is on the forgiveness they are to offer on behalf of God and self. Thus one is to give God's forgiveness (teach) to those who ask.

This paragraph then is a warning against judging one's relationship to God on the basis of material goods (as if the kingdom was now).

- a) **Basing one's righteousness and the judgment of others on their good works will result in failure when the true Judge judges He will administer the true assessment of their works and they will fall far short.**

The Pharisee had judged others and himself on the basis of his works. However he was in error since his righteousness did not accomplish much at all in God's sight (cf. 5:20). Thus, God would judge his righteousness and he would be lacking greatly. (The lesson which will soon come out is that one should see things as God sees them and one would judge their own righteousness as unworthy).

7:1 "Do not judge lest you be judged. 2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

- b) **Illustration: When looking through one's eye (human perspective) and in comparative righteousness one fails to perceive his accurate (God's perspective) state of depravity (7:3-4).**

The issue of the 'eye' here is not new. The 'eye' previously was the means by which one perceived and evaluated. In 5:27-29 the eye had lusted (coveted) a woman whom God had given to another. He was thus told to pluck it out if it offended. The 'eye' is the input of the actions, or the evaluation of human reasoning or seeing through revelation. This person has rejected the ability to perceive himself accurately, and is using his own perceived righteousness (as per human reasoning) to evaluate others' righteousness.

3 "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?

- c) **Instruction: One needs to have the obstruction (human reasoning) removed from their perception so they can see accurately (revelation) and thus tell others of God's perception so as to aid their deliverance (7:5).**

5 "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

3. The representative of God must be willing to give His righteousness to those who ask, for God does the same⁴ (7:6-12).

Again, this is not a new topic, nor an unrelated separate verse of proverbial import. Jesus has just stated that the disciple is to insure that he has perceived the revelation of God for himself and applied it thusly (recognized his own depravity of mind and submitted to God's viewpoint). He moves now to describe the impartation process of the revelation of God and the content (righteousness) of that revelation.

a. The representative of God cannot give (on behalf of God) God's righteousness to those who do not perceive (judge) God (holy) and themselves properly (evil),⁵ for God does not give to those who do not recognize⁶ His holiness (dogs⁷) and their evil state as illustrated by the fact that swine⁸ (evil men) do not value God's holiness (pearls) (7:6).⁹

There is only one thing described as 'holy' in the sermon. It is God's Name in 6:9, "Hallowed (Holy) be Thy Name". The point of the 'holiness' of God here is simply that God has it and man does not, nor can man achieve it on his own. The whole of the Sermon coming after the Old Testament is a very testimony to man's inability. Thus God will not give His Holiness (righteousness) to those who do not comprehend it's value (take the mote out of their eye) since they will not respect it and lower its perceived value.¹⁰

⁴ cf. Isaiah 55:1, also Matt. 5:6. James 1:5.

⁵ cf. 7:11 for this confirmation of God as good and man as evil.

⁶ Refer to James 1:6 where one should ask without any doubting. The doubting in James is a misperception by the reader that God *is* holy and man is evil, and that the reader must perceive God as merciful. (The Pharisee perceived God as judgmental without mercy requiring that he earn and justify his way before God.)

⁷ 2 Peter 2:22 also uses dogs as returning to their vomit. It is a man returning to human revelation after having perceived the value of God's revelation. The dog in Proverbs (which is what Peter is quoting) is a fool, a rejector of revelation, the wisdom of God (Prov. 26:11).

⁸ It should be noted that 2 Peter 2:22 uses the pigs as an illustration of one who turns back to the state he was before, and has ignored the revelation of God. Here also is the case of the swine as one who ignores the value of the revelation (perception).

⁹ Refer to Matt. 25:9 where the five wise virgins refused to give the five foolish virgins any of their oil.

¹⁰ This is what is known as the sin with the 'high hand' or the treating of holy things as common. In the Old Testament this is exactly what Israel had done was to treat the holy things as common when given symbols and partials to demonstrate their valuing of such. They did not and thus now when full righteousness comes in, it will only be given to those who value it.

6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

- b. **The representative of God should give God's righteousness to those who ask (teaches others, 5:19) since God gives likewise as a father gives good gifts to his children¹¹ (7:7-11).**

The point here is that Jesus is guaranteeing that God will give His righteousness ("what is good") to those who ask for it. The point, when seen in light of the 'swine' illustration, is that when one asks for something, he realizes its value in relationship to himself. In other words, if one does not perceive (eye) a need for himself (he judges himself as righteous) then he does not ask for something.¹²

Thus the representative is to ask to receive righteousness from God. He then, having taken the mote out of his own eye, will take the mote out of his brother's eye by declaring to him the same means of deliverance.

7 "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock¹³, and it shall be opened to you. 8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. 9 "Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? 10 "Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? 11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

- c. **The representative of God must do for others (give mercy as God gives) as one would want done for Him (receiving mercy) for the Law and the Prophets¹⁴ reveals God as a giving God and instructs His representatives to be like Him. (7:12).**

This is another one of the misused verses that takes a life of its own. While usually applied to kind treatment of others (which would be good and which may have some tangential meeting place), it's contextual

¹¹ Refer to the forgiveness issue in Matt. 18:18-20, where forgiveness offered on earth is paralleled to that of heaven.

¹² It should be pointed out that one must ask for what God offers in the parameters within which God has established. For instance, when I was in seminary I worked with an Indian who worshipped some Indian religion. When I told him of the Savior, he came back the next day saying that he had decided to incorporate Jesus into his religion also, thinking he was agreeing with me. However, this is not what God offers. He offers righteousness that can only be given through Him, as revealed in Jesus Christ. To ask for righteousness (i.e., get into heaven) from God when one includes other gods, or his own works, is not to recognize the value of God's righteousness (since it would be advocated that it could be duplicated by an evil man) and thus to ask an imagined God (not one of revelation) for an imagined righteousness (which ultimately would be man's works) which would be making Jesus equivalent to the righteousness of some other god, which would be abhorrent and heretical.

¹³ There is a suggestion that this should be "keep on (seeking, asking, knocking)" as opposed to a one-time event. That this might be indicated by the present active imperative here followed by a future indicative is not the case, i.e., Matt. 19:21.

¹⁴ Note this forms an inclusio with 5:17.

meaning is to grant the mercy offered through Jesus Christ to others as one has received it himself.

This really goes back to the original statement of chapter 7 where one was judging others on the basis of his own self-perception and value system. Now the summary is that one should ultimately judge based on God's judgment and desire that he be judged on that not on man's. If one does not desire to be judged on man's system (which can always be felt as a constant battle to achieve) then he would want to be judged on God's system and treated thusly.

The Law and the Prophets proclaimed the worthlessness of man and the approach of Christ, the great Son through Whom would come forgiveness. This is God's plan, this is how man should want to be treated by his brother, and this is how he should treat his brother.

This point of the Law and the Prophets is made throughout the gospels, that one should love his brother (Leviticus 19:18) as God has loved the man. Matthew 22:35-40 proclaims this as the fullness of the Law and the Prophets. God is holy and man should show the same love of God toward himself toward his brother.

12 "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.