

Matthew 6:1-8  
The Rewards We Seek

Psalm 86:8-13

There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. (ESV)

“You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.” (Augustine) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all of your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4) All of us are driven by desires. We were created to desire. We all have a longing in our heart. There are many men and women who spend their lives chasing unsatisfying desires. I saw on a tombstone the other day in my home town, “Worked hard all my life, got nothing to show for it.” We only get one shot at this life, we better make sure that we are living it well. How can you make sure that you are living life? It all goes back to desires.

I still believe that there are still traces of unchristian thought when a preacher mentions a word like desire. Preacher, don't talk dirty to us, don't talk about our desires. Maybe you know some Christians who live with this idea that if it is fun it must be of the devil. One of the worst consequences of sin is the conflict that it has brought between our desires. As some have said, sin has come and bound our wills so that no matter how hard we try, apart from divine intervention and empowerment, our whole will is bound to evil. This is why the Sermon on the Mount is so gripping. Just from chapter 6 we learn that nothing is safe from the pervasiveness of sin, not even prayer. Now that sin has entered the world there is a conflict of our desires. Desiring is not bad, but bad desiring is. How can we tell the difference between what is a bad desire and what is a good desire? As chapter 6 of Matthew tells us, it isn't enough to desire to pray, we have to desire to pray in the right way. In Chapter 6, Jesus lays out a path for us to follow, a path that he himself has come blazing for us as the first born of creation so that we who are born by the Spirit and through his blood will have our hearts fixed of desiring him.

READ TEXT

Notice right away how Chapter 6 opens. Yes, we see the warning, but look what it is that motivates the warning – REWARDS. Now there is much to this idea, and I want to make sure that we cover it, but we need to make this point over and over again: God delights in our delighting in him. If you think that you have to choose between your joy, or God’s glory, you are sadly mistaken. If you think that you cannot enjoy God then you don’t know God. God has created us to desire and the greatest desire that we can have is him. John Piper has said it best, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.”

I wonder, how many of you can truly look at our life as a Christian and say, I am satisfied. I wonder, how many of us have as the beat of our heart pleasing God and not pleasing him is as bad for us as our heart going into arrhythmia? You know what arrhythmia is right? If you have arrhythmia then your heart is out of rhythm, and if your heart is out of rhythm for too long you can die! I have been your pastor for some time now and I wonder how many here have found that Christ is their satisfaction and joy?

I want to give you two truths to encourage you to not be satisfied until you are seeking the right reward. Don’t waste your life chasing shadows and vapor, pursue the God who is already pursuing you.

#### 1. God Rewards Those Who Seek Him

Look at verse 6. *And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.* Not might reward you, will reward you! Doesn’t the thought of that thrill your heart? You and I have a Father in heaven who sees and who rewards. Our God is not disengaged, he is *El Roi* – the God who sees, and he is *YHWH Yireh* – the God who provides. The problem is not our desiring, the problem is our desires are too shallow. Listen to C.S. Lewis.

Lewis says,

“The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contain an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” (Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*)

Look again through these verses. There is the promise of reward but nothing specific about the reward. I think the reason for this is so that we will not limit the reward. *As it is written,*

*“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the heart of man imagined,  
what God has prepared for those who love him”*— (1 Corinthians 2:9)

And we know what he has prepared because the Son has come to show us the Father. We know him as Father and are able to address him as Father because of the wonderful ministry of the Son. The Son has taken vagabonds like us and given us an inheritance in heaven. The reason the reward is not specified is so that our focus will be on our Father who rewards us! He is our reward. That isn't some utopian ultra-spiritual talk, that assures us that our desires are for Him and we are not dividing our devotion between desiring the things that he offers and him. There is no distinction for the heart of a follower of Jesus. You get the gift, you get the giver of the gift. And, I don't know about you, but I want anything my Father who is in heaven whose name is hallowed can and will give me. As Spurgeon said,

My Master has riches beyond the count of arithmetic, the measurement of reason, the dream of imagination, or the eloquence of words. They are unsearchable! You may look, and study, and weigh, but Jesus is a greater Savior than you think him to be when your thoughts are at the greatest. My Lord is more ready to pardon than you to sin, more able to forgive than you to transgress. My Master is more willing to supply your wants than you are to confess them. Never tolerate low thoughts of my Lord Jesus. When you put the crown on his head, you will only crown him with silver when he deserves gold. My Master has riches of happiness to bestow upon you now. He can make you to lie down in green pastures, and lead you beside still waters. There is no music like the music of his pipe, when he is the Shepherd and you are the sheep, and you lie down at his feet. There is no love like his, neither earth nor heaven can match it. To know Christ and to be found in him--oh! this is life, this is joy, this is marrow and fatness, wine on the lees well refined. My Master does not treat his servants churlishly; he gives to them as a king giveth to a king; he gives them two heavens--a heaven below in serving him here, and a heaven above in delighting in him forever. His unsearchable riches will be best known in eternity. He will give you on the way to heaven all you need; your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks, your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure; but it is there, there, where you shall hear the song of them that triumph, the shout of them that feast, and shall have a face-to-face view of the glorious and beloved One. The unsearchable riches of Christ! This is the tune for the minstrels of earth, and the song for the harpers of heaven. Lord, teach us more and more of Jesus, and we will tell out the good news to others.

Think about how absolutely purposeless everything would be if there was not a Father in heaven who sees in secret. What hope would we have, what word of assurance to anchor our souls if God were just some idea beyond our imaginations and not intimately acquainted with us? But the Bible reveals God to us and tells us that he sees and rewards. But the question that we have to ask is, what is it that we see? How is your vision? If your life consumed with the vision of a Father who is in heaven whose name is hallowed, whose kingdom is coming, whose will be done

on earth just as it is in heaven? Plainly, are you seeking God's reward? That is point number 2 this morning:

## 2. Seek God's Reward

The way that we are told to seek God's reward is to pray. Isn't that interesting? How does prayer mean that we are seeking God's reward? Prayer is one of the most faith-filled exercises on this side of heaven. This is why more of us don't do it, we don't have much faith. Think about prayer. We order our thoughts around a God that we cannot see and expect him to do things that we can only imagine. Do you see the faith? It's incredible. To get on your knees and put your face on the floor and cry out to God. Amazing. The act of praying is full of faith. But what is the object of your faith? A Father in heaven who rewards? I hope so. It should be. Listen to this passage in Hebrews.

*And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)*

We see the same theme repeated here, though this time it is fixed with a life of faith. When Jesus calls us to pray, he is calling us to a life of faith. Rest assured, a person who kneels before God can stand before anyone. A person who doesn't kneel before God is a person who can't stand up to anything. And, a person who will kneel before God in private prayer is a man who will walk with God before men. You can't walk with God before others if you aren't willing to walk with him in the quietest moments of your life.

God rewards those who seek him. Aren't you glad? I wonder how the thought of a God in heaven who rewards determines your living? When you pray, do you expect God to reward? Are you praying with expectancy? I think that we are afraid of praying with expectancy because we are so unsure of God's will, but what if we could be sure of God's will, then could we pray with expectancy? What if what we expected when we prayed was the will of God?

George Müller of Bristol was a British Evangelist in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In his lifetime, he cared for over 10,000 orphans, and never asked for a dime from anyone except God. Müller was a man of great faith, a prayer warrior. There was a story told about Mr. Müller from a steam boat captain who was transporting Mr. Müller to a speaking engagement. There was a thick fog threatening to delay the arrival of the vessel which meant that Mr. Müller would miss his speaking engagement. Müller went to the bridge and asked the captain if he was going to make his engagement. The captain replied that the fog was going to hinder them from making it on time. Müller said, "I have not missed a speaking engagement in 57 years, and I am not going to start now. Let's go and pray." The captain, who really just wanted the man to leave him alone followed Müller down to his quarters. George Müller got on his knees and prayed a simple prayer. "Lord I believe it's you will for me to preach. If it is consistent with you will, will you please lift the fog? Thank you Lord for lifting the fog, in Jesus name, Amen." Before the captain could pray, George Müller placed his hand upon his shoulder and said, "Captain there is no reason for you to pray. First you

don't believe God will move the fog, and second the fog is already gone." The Captain ran up to the bridge and sure enough the thick fog had lifted and Mr. Müller made it on time to preach.

You know why prayer is so important? When we pray we declare our desperation for God's will to be done no matter what. God intends prayer to center our pursuits. When we pray we are making a verifiable declaration that we have no other hope than God's direct intervention. Until you get to that point and delight in that point, you will continue to chase shadows and vapor.

Don't waste your life pursuing anything other than all that he offers. What is it that he offers? In a word, in the most beautiful summary, Jesus. *All the promises of God find their Yes in him* (2 Corinthians 1:20)