

Matthew 6:1-6

Tuning Our Hearts

Have you ever been around a person who has a musical ear? Not just someone who can play by ear but someone whose ear has been trained to pick out sharps and flats. I have a friend whose Dad has been a band director in North Georgia for many years. One day my friend's dad was attending a concert and was asked how he enjoyed the concert. He replied, it was great except for one thing, the 3rd trumpet was sharp the whole time. When I heard that story I was in awe, how could this man out of all the brass, woodwind, percussion, and strings pick out the 3rd trumpet as being sharp? There was only one answer, he knew how it should have sounded and by his practice has tuned his ear to know the difference between in tune and out of tune.

Today we start Matthew 6, go ahead and join me over there if you don't mind. We are continuing our study on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount and have come a long way on our journey, but we aren't done yet. By the way, I hope none of you are in a hurry. We have the rest of our lives to climb the text and even in eternity we will never make it all the way to the top. All along life we are ascending the hill of the Lord, and even in eternity if we think that we ever make it we will reach a new vista to see an endless range for us to climb. What a joy to know the Lord.

READ TEXT

The Sermon on the Mount is a picture of this new life that Jesus is bringing to a world full of death, light to a world full of darkness, hope in the midst of hopelessness. At the center of this new life is the life of Jesus who has come to love, heal, cleanse, and forgive. As he comes he bids us come to him and follow him. Yes, the Sermon is about our life, but never just about our life. The Sermon is about our life with Him, a life that he has secured by giving his own life so that we could live this life he has called us to.

Look at the Sermon. Matthew 5 gives us the glimpse of the character that Christ is forming in those who love him. These blessed statements, Christ coming to fulfill the law, and then living in light of his fulfillment in areas like anger, lust, divorce, retaliation, etc. Chapter 6 then comes at us rather heavily. It hammers us again as it reminds us that being religious is not enough. It has never been enough for us to look alright on the outside. Here is the real danger that Christ warns us about in chapter 6, we can be very religious, read our Bibles, attend discipleship, give to the poor, be a preacher, a Sunday

school teacher, a deacon, sing in the choir, be here every time the doors are open, and miss eternity with God.

What matters with God is not only *what* we do but *why* we do. Can you feel the weight? God knows not only what you do but why it is you do what you do. It may look great on the outside, you may even gain the praise of men, but God knows your heart.

Imagine if you and I were gathered at a music hall to hear one of the greatest pieces ever written for piano - Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. (Play music softly)¹ We are all connoisseurs of music and are expecting an excellent performance. The hall is filled, everyone is dressed for the occasion, the lights are turned down low and are filling the hall with a red glow from the tapestries on the wall, at the center of the wooden stage is a piano lit by a single spotlight. We can hardly wait to hear the music. The pianist is greeted onto the stage with cheers of anticipation. As she sits down to the piano and places her hands on the keys we hear the first note and know that something is not right.² The piano, playing the right song by an expert pianist, is severely out of tune. It is not enough to have the right song; our lives have to be in tune so that the Lord can use our lives to play a melody of his praise. He fills the earth with the knowledge of himself and the way that he has chosen to do so is by redeeming us.

Christ has come to not only give us the greatest song to sing but to prepare our lives to sing that song in the most beautiful way. This preparation is called sanctification and it is God preparing us here for an eternity with him. If we could only live with this vision for our lives. If we could only realize, as Paul says, *that this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* (2 Corinthians 4:17-18, ESV).

God is calling us to center our pursuits, to make sure that our hearts are in tune with his praise. In this passage, there are three ways for us to tune our hearts. I invite you to look at them with me, learn them with me, write them down, and have ourselves be moved in the direction of being all that God desires us to be. Are you ready?

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsOUcikyGRk>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9qlj39c1Ew>

1. Feel the Tension of Life in Christ

Think about our confession as Christians. We know that we were made for another world, this is why nothing in this world satisfies. We live in this world with this knowledge and face all sorts of difficulties and hardships. We have the knowledge of how things are but also how things will be. Plus, we have our own experience knowing there is more but living as if this is all there is. As Christians, we know that God is preparing a place for us, and the place he is preparing is wonderful. Mansion in glory, streets of gold, pearly gates, no more sorrow or hurt, no shame or regret, forever with the Lord. There will be no need for lawyers, doctors, or preachers. No more need for psychiatrists, contracts, or medication. I can't wait, but we have to wait. Can you feel the tension? This is the tension just caused by knowing the two great extremes - what it is and what it will be. And if we weren't aware of the tension before, Matthew 6 is here to remind us. Read the passage.

How are we to make sense of what our Lord is saying. *Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen.* Earlier, in 5:16 he says, *Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.* Some of you may not see a distinction, some of you might. What are we to do? Are we to live out our faith or not? The answer, is of course we are to live out our faith before others. But how we live out our faith is what concerns our Lord. It is not enough to live out our faith, we have to live out our faith the right way. It is not enough for me to smile with you up here if when I get in my car with my wife and kids I yell at them and treat them as dogs. God sees you in secret and knows your heart. Even the good that you do, if not done with the right motives is not good to God.

What are we to do? We are to feel the weight of his glory and trust in his grace. Live with the overwhelming awareness of his presence. You and I cannot escape his presence. David found this out in Psalm 139. In that Psalm, he sings the tune of a man who feels the tension of a life with God. Listen to how it opens.

Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.

You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before
a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD,
you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind
and before, and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.

Where shall I go from your Spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there!

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take
the wings of the morning and dwell in the
utmost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall
lead me,

and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night," even the
darkness is not dark to you; the night
is bright as the day, for darkness is as light
with you.

Then listen to how it ends:

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting! (ESV)

Feel the tension, delight in the tension, be aware of and overwhelmed by God's
presence and number 2:

2. Practice Righteousness

Notice in Matthew 6 that Jesus takes things for granted. He takes for granted that we will pray, fast, and give. This should clue us onto something. This should let us know that there are certain things that Christians do that keeps with a confession that there is more to this life than meets the eye. Our Lord takes us through each of these as we go through the Sermon but each of these are indicators of the more that we confess. These things are not the things in themselves but point to our hope. People say things like prayer changes things. Well that's not the whole story. Prayers not the thing. A God who hears our prayers and responds to our prayers is the reason we pray. We pray, fast, and give to tell our hearts and the hearts of all those watching that there is an eternity awaiting all men. We do what we do because we are motivated by God. Our practicing righteousness is an overflow of our desire, a desire that he has given us, to be with him. We practice these things here as long as we are away from him.

Listen, don't overcomplicate things. Just practice righteousness. Don't be a hypocrite, be genuine. I love the word hypocrite. Hypocrite is a Greek word and was a word used to describe someone who was an actor who played a part on a stage. A hypocrite is someone playing a part for the praise of men. Here is the danger to avoid and why feeling the tension of the Christian life is important. If you don't feel the tension in every area of your life, what to say, when to say, how to say, what to watch, when to watch, go here or there, then you will be prone to hypocrisy. The tension is a good thing because it forces us not to section of our lives like an actor who changes roles in a play. We go to church and act one way, then get in the car and act another way, as if we just forget all thoughts of our consuming God. When we feel the tension, we can practice righteousness.

Live one way not two. Live a righteous life not a life of hypocrisy. Righteousness is that same word that we saw in 5:20, *Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* Righteousness is what we who love Jesus have received when we gave our lives to him. Righteousness is what we are receiving day by day. Righteousness is all that will remain forever.

So just do something. We should be concerned about our motives, but don't let the concern for your motives paralyze you from doing something. If your fear of doing something with the wrong motives keep you from doing anything for God then you are just as guilty as the hypocrite that our Lord is condemning here. I have struggled with

this. I develop this inferiority complex, this perfectionist complex that can hinder effectiveness. You know why it hinders effectiveness? I am too focused on self and the focus on myself is nothing more than hypocrisy. How can I be rid of myself if I am consumed with myself? This chapter is calling us to focus on Jesus not ourselves. Live out your faith in the love of God.

You and I were created to live and living is seeking approval, but whose approval? The approval of the crowd? The approval of yourself as your left hand congratulates the left? The approval that we seek must be God's. Number 3 this AM. If we are to live a life tuned to God we will

3. Seek Heaven's Reward

Some of you don't believe me. There is still an idea of the joyless Christian life. There is still an idea that anything that is fun cant be Christian. So, what do people do? They delight in not delighting missing the point that they are still delighting in something. We were created to seek the approval of heaven and God intends to give us the reward. The reward - Well done good and faithful servant.

This is the height of our longing. Looking forward to something is good and Christ has come to show us what our hearts should be longing for. We are longing for him because we know that only He satisfies. Maybe we need some help to wade through these waters. I don't want any confusion about following Christ and seeking rewards. The best help I have found on this subject is from C.S. Lewis. In an essay called the Weight of Glory, C.S. Lewis put it this way:

“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 contains 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.” (page 1)

Don't be too easily pleased, long for the greatest reward there is - on that day on the ends of days and the beginning of eternity when God with his flaming eyes of fire looks into our souls and says the greatest words we could ever hear - well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of my rest.

If our lives are out of tune we at least have the song, the lost don't even have that.

How many of you today are willing to say, my life is out of tune, I need my motivations to be Jesus only Jesus? How many of you today would be wise enough to say I didn't even know there was such a tune as “Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus”? Wont you come? Respond to the gospel of grace.