

Sermon Discussion Guide

February 11, 2024

Matthew 6:24-34

"Grace, Gratitude, Generosity" (Hope Overflowing Sermon Series)

Hope is starting a sermon series in conjunction with our Hope Overflowing Initiative. We are looking together at what the Bible has to say about why and how we spend our time and money. Actions we're calling "grace, gratitude, and generosity."

We'll spend 6 weeks tracing how God's grace stirs up our gratitude, and how this gratitude overflows into generosity - a generosity poured out into this world and into the lives of others. This 1st Sunday we begin with tracing God's Heart: how His heart's desire is to free us from living in anxiety.

Leader's Notes:

(1) This passage occurs midway through Jesus' most famous speech: the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Therefore, it's been central to every generation's and culture's "take" on Christianity and what it means to be a Christian. Sadly, many - whether self-described "Christians" or not - tend to misread the Sermon on the Mount the same way as the whole Bible. They (and we!) can see Sermon on the Mount as merely good advice I should really just get around to doing - like the gym or a diet. But Jesus meant his words primarily as an invitation: He is asking us to see the world and our lives in a new way - with spiritual imagination. So, what does it look like to live as if God exists, and He is in control of everything, and He is filled-to-overflowing with unearned and unexpected gifts? That is the invitation Jesus is extending to all of us, in every part of our lives.

(2) The big idea(s) of Matthew 6:24-34: What do we treasure? Where does what we treasure move our lives? How can God change our treasure and life-direction?

(3) Please read through all the questions ahead of time. You will need to be selective, and not ask all the questions. There are more than a healthy discussion can handle.

Also, the un-bolded and un-numbered questions that are indented-to-the-right and below are meant as follow-up questions for the main questions that are bolded and numbered. Use the follow up questions if the main question are too difficult or too easy, or to take the conversation deeper.

Examine. Taking a closer look at the passage

Read aloud Matthew 6:24-34 two times, with two different readers.

1. **What is one question you have about this passage?**
 - Would someone else like to interact with this question - give a thought (not answer) or a follow-up question?
 - What other questions does this passage or what's been said make you wonder about?

Discuss. *Studying the passage (using the sermon) to observe and interpret*
± Apply. *Making the connection from thinking to action, from their lives to ours*

2. **What fears or concerns do you tend to have about money?**
3. **How was money handled in your home growing up?**
 - Did your family ever discuss money?
 - If so, how did they talk about it?
 - If not, why do you think they never talked about it?
4. **How is money handled in your home now?**
 - Do you ever discuss money?
 - If so, how do you talk about it?
 - If not, why do you think you never talk about it?
5. **In verses 25-26 Jesus directs our worries to look at the birds. By doing this he is telling us that we can often use money or possessions for a sense of security. Do you find yourself saving money to achieve a sense of security? How?**
 - What do you feel about life when you look at your bank statement?
 - How do you feel when it is "low"?
 - How do you feel when it is "high"?
 - What do you do with that feeling you have when you see your savings?
6. **In verses 27-30 Jesus directs us in our worries to look at the flowers. By doing this he is telling us that we can often use money or possessions for a sense of significance. Do you find yourself spending money to achieve a sense of significance? When?**
 - What do you feel when you look at your credit card statement?
 - How do you feel when it is "high"?
 - How do you feel when it is "low"?
 - What do you do with that feeling you have when you see your spending?
7. **In what specific ways have you experienced God being generous to you?**
 - Describe a time when God was generous with you spiritually.
 - Describe a time when God was generous with you relationally.
 - Describe a time when God was generous with you in circumstances or finances.

8. When you are "anxious about tomorrow" what do you typically do?
- What do you think about?
 - What do you feel- emotionally or in your body?
 - What choices do you make?
9. What do you think Jesus means when he says, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"?
- What does it look like to do this in your life?
 - What do you make of his promise "and all these things will be added to you"?
10. How would your life look different if you truly believed that the God of the Universe was your Father (and that you were not a spiritual orphan)?
- How would you pray differently?
 - How would you speak differently?
 - How would you act or feel differently?

Prayer. How does this topic or passage lead me to pray and how can we pray for each other?

- Ask God to show you: what- if anything- gets in the way of you having a generous heart?
 - Take a few moments to confess that, asking for God's forgiveness and help.
- Are there specific ways that God has used the people at Hope to demonstrate God's love to you?
 - Take a few moments to name those people and specific ways to God.
 - And give thanks for them and for God using them in your life.
- Pray the following aloud (led by one volunteer or all-together as a group):
"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread..."