

**Thought for Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2020**  
**Pastor Gordon Hamilton**

**Read Matthew 6:1-15**

Jesus moves, in the Sermon on the Mount, from talking about legalistic matters, to the way we should live our lives. Not but proclaiming from the roof tops how great we are, what we do for God, but rather the fact that we should get on with our lives doing the will of God and showing it through our deeds. Back at the end of May I shared this poem with you; *‘Not merely in the words you say, not only in your deeds confessed, but in the most unconscious way is Christ expressed. Is it the calm and peaceful smile? A holy light upon your brow? Oh no! I felt his presence while you laughed just now. For me ’twas not the truth you taught, to you so clear, to me so dim, but when you came to me, you brought a sense of Him. And from your eyes He beckons me, and from your heart His love is shed, till I lose sight of you and see the Christ instead.’* This is what these verses are talking about. Yes, we are called to do acts of righteousness, but, No, we are not called to *‘announce it with trumpets.’* People like to hear that someone has given something to a charitable cause and the media make a big fuss over someone giving a sizeable donation, but I ask the question, how sizeable is it to their wealth. Mark 12:42 talks of the widow who put two very small copper coins into the offering and Jesus said; *‘she, out of her poverty, put in everything, all she had to live on.’* Strangely, it is her offering that is given the glory, just that we don’t know who she was, we are just told she was a ‘poor widow.’ When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, give in secret. God knows your heart and in that will reward you. it is the same with prayer. Some people love to pray in full view of everyone. There was a Muslim man, a taxi driver who at certain times of the day would get his pray mat out by the side of the road, and pray. My prayer is that he was being serious in his prayers and not doing it for show. What Jesus is talking about in this passage, are those who make pretence of going to the synagogue to pray, but made a habit of being just a bit late, so they couldn’t get there in time and would therefore pray in the open for all to see. You may remember the story of Daniel in Daniel 6, where Daniel opened the windows of his residence and prayed to God for all to see. Jesus wouldn’t have had a problem with that because we are called to stand up for our faith, but there is a difference between standing up for our faith and making out how ‘holy’ we are. I am sure we have all heard the comments of people who don’t go to church because the churches are full of hypocrites. Our lives must mirror our faith, which brings us to prayer. Verse 7; *‘when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.’* I remember a children’s song of a few years ago; *‘Prayer is like a telephone that we can talk to Jesus. Prayer is like a telephone that we can talk to God, so pick it up and use it every day. You can shout out loud, you can whisper softly, you can use no words at all.’* And there were actions as well. With mobile phones nowadays we are used to speaking to anyone, anywhere, anytime. Even in my car I have a hands free phone. We have always had that ability, that freedom, to speak to God wherever and whenever we choose. When we pray we don’t have to get a pray mat out, we don’t have to close our eyes and put our hands together, in fact if you are driving, can I suggest you keep your eyes open. Someone once told me that I didn’t trust God enough if I had to keep my eyes open while driving. I say, that is like getting your pray mat out and saying; *‘see how good I am, I am praying!!!’* verses 9-14 are the words of the Lord’s Prayer. I am sure that the vast majority of us learned these words many years ago, and we can recite them without thinking. That can be a real danger. I can remember when I was in Sierra Leone in 2013 I took the service in Rev

Sylvanus Nicol's church, and two of the young people with me did a sketch, someone saying their prayers and God(in red) responding, which started off; *'Our Father Who Art In Heaven. **Yes?** Don't interrupt me. I'm praying. **But -- you called ME!** Called you? No I didn't call you. I'm praying. Our Father who art in Heaven. **There -- you did it again!** Did what? **You called ME. You said, "Our Father who art in Heaven" Well here I am, what do you want?** But I didn't mean anything by it. I was, you know, just saying my prayers for the day. I always say the Lord's Prayer. It makes me feel good, kind of like fulfilling a duty all right.'* And it went on through the Lord's Prayer, God,(in red) interrupting someone saying their prayers. Do we just go through the motions? Do we just say the words without thinking about what we are saying. Let's look at some more of that sketch; *'Hallowed be thy name. **What do you mean by that?** By what? **By "Hallowed be thy name"?** It means... I don't know what it means. How in the world should I know? It's just a part of the prayer. By the way, what does it mean? **It means honoured, holy, wonderful.** That makes sense.. I never thought about what 'hallowed' meant before. **Thanks.** Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. **Do you really mean that?** Sure, why not? **What are you doing about it?** Doing? Why, nothing, I guess. I just think it would be kind of neat if you got control, of everything down here like you have up there. We're in a bit of a mess down here you know. **Yes, I know; but, have I got control of you?** Well, I go to church. **That isn't what I asked you. What about your bad temper? You've really got a problem there, you know. And then there's the way you spend your money -- all on yourself. And what about the kind of books you read ?** Now hold on just a minute! Stop picking on me! I'm just as good as some of the rest of those people at church! **Excuse ME.. I thought you were praying for my will to be done. If that is to happen, it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. Like you -- for example.'** I haven't room to share the whole of the sketch but I hope this has given you a little food for thought. Our reading ends with verses 14-15 and we dare not forget these words. Jesus ended by going to the cross to pay the price of our sins. Do we dare take our sin lightly? If God loved us so much then we must show that love, that forgiveness by loving and forgiving others. We may say it in the Lord's Prayer; *'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.'* if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Be blessed and keep safe.*

*Wonderful grace, that gives what I don't deserve,  
Pays me what Christ has earned, then lets me go free.  
Wonderful grace, that gives me the time to change,  
Washes away the stains that once covered me.*

*And all that I have, I lay at the feet,  
Of the wonderful Saviour who loves me.*

*Wonderful grace, that held in the face of death,  
Breathed in its latest breath forgiveness for me.  
Wonderful love, whose power can break every chain,  
Giving us life again, setting us free.*

*And all that I have, I lay at the feet,  
Of the wonderful Saviour who loves me.*

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