

Last week we discussed **Matthew 6:1, 16-18** – “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.” “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

What do you think this scripture means? Why is Jesus telling us this?

**Matthew 6:1-4** – “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

**Leo Tolstoy** (1828 - 1910) was a Russian novelist, pacifist, and reformer. Leo Tolstoy is known for being one of the greatest novelists of all time, famous for epic books like *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, which are masterpieces of realist fiction exploring love, morality, and Russian society. He's also renowned as a moral philosopher and social reformer, advocating for simple living, Christian anarchism, and nonviolent resistance, profoundly influencing figures like Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr..

“A man of the modern world who profits by the order of things based on violence, and at the same observe what he is doing in his daily life to his neighbor, is like a brigand...”

A brigand is an armed bandit or robber, typically operating as part of a gang in remote areas like forests or mountains, living by stealing from travelers. Originating from 14th-century terms for lightly armed irregular soldiers, they function as outlaws or marauders, often emerging in post-war periods. They are synonymous with plunderers, highwaymen, and desperadoes.

“...who has spent his life in robbing people, and who, caught at last, knife in hand, in the very act of striking his shrieking victim, should declare that he had no idea that what he was doing was disagreeable to the man he had robbed and was prepared to murder.”

What is Tolstoy saying about people who profit from the oppression of others? What is the mentality of these people?

“...we too, it would seem, cannot persuade ourselves or others that the soldiers and policemen around us are not to guard us, but only for defense against foreign foes, and to regulate traffic and fetes and reviews; we cannot persuade ourselves and others that we do not know that people do not like dying of hunger, bereft of the right to gain their subsistence from the earth on which they live; that they do not like working underground, in the water, or in stifling heat, for ten to fourteen hours a day, at night in factories to manufacture objects for our pleasure.”

What is Tolstoy saying here about how we think about those who are struggling?

Living conditions in 19th-century Russia during Leo Tolstoy's lifetime (1828–1910) were defined by extreme disparity, characterized by a small, luxurious aristocratic class and a vast, impoverished peasantry that comprised over 90% of the population. The era was marked by the transition from feudal serfdom to a slowly industrializing society, with the 1861 emancipation of the serfs providing personal freedom but failing to alleviate deep-seated poverty for the majority.

How did society during Tolstoy's life influence his opinion on scripture? How does our society effect our perspective on scripture?

“One would imagine it impossible to deny what is so obvious. Yet it is denied.” What is Tolstoy saying is denied and why?

**John Chrysostom** (347 – 407) was the Archbishop of Constantinople, church father, and saint. He is known for his preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders, his Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, and his ascetic sensibilities. Living conditions during John Chrysostom's time (c. 347–407 AD) in Antioch and Constantinople were marked by extreme contrasts, featuring opulent wealth for the elite alongside widespread poverty, exploitation, and moral decay. The era was characterized by rampant urban immorality, political intrigue, and a lukewarm, largely formalistic church.

“Deprive not the poor of his living” (Sirach 4:1). Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) isn't in Protestant Bibles because it wasn't in the Hebrew canon established by Jews after Jesus' time, and Protestants followed this Jewish standard (the Tanakh) for their Old Testament, though it is in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles (as deuterocanonical) because early Christians used the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) which included it. Reasons for Jewish exclusion included its later composition, Greek origin (initially), and some perceived theological differences, while Protestants later excluded it for similar reasons, viewing it as apocryphal wisdom rather than inspired scripture. Why are some books not included in the Protestant Bible?

“To deprive is to take what belongs to another; for it is called deprivation when we take and keep what belongs to others. By this we are taught that when we do not show mercy, we will be punished just like those who steal. For our money is the Lord's, however we may have gathered it. If we provide for those in need, we shall obtain great plenty.” What is Chrysostom saying here? Who does our money belong to?

“This is why God has allowed you to have more: not for you to waste on prostitutes, drink, fancy food, expensive clothes, and all the other kinds of indolence, but for you to distribute to those in need.” ...“Therefore let us use our goods sparingly, as belonging to others, so that they may become our own. ...do not spend for our needs only, but give equal shares into the hands of the poor.”

What is Chrysostom saying we should do with our goods? Why is it so hard for some to give to others?

**Mother Teresa** (1910 – 1997) was the founder of the Missionaries of Charity and Catholic saint.

“The love you put into the giving is the most important thing.” “The chance to share our love with others is a gift from God.

May it be for us just as it was for Jesus.”