A HARMONY OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS — CHAPTER SIX

Matthew 6, Mark 3 (opening), and Luke 6 Woven Into One Continuous Narrative

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Preface: Continuation of the Harmony

This volume continues the harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke through their sixth chapters. Chapter six divides naturally into two movements. The first follows the triple-tradition controversy and ministry narratives: Mark 3 and Luke 6 carry the story of the man with the withered hand healed on the sabbath, Jesus's withdrawal to the sea with great multitudes, and the night of prayer before the appointment of the Twelve. The second movement belongs almost entirely to Matthew 6 — the second chapter of the Sermon on the Mount — which contains some of the most personally searching ethical teaching in all of Scripture: the proper practice of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting; the Lord's Prayer in full; and extended meditations on treasure, the lamp of the body, the impossibility of serving two masters, and the great discourse on anxiety and the lilies of the field.

Each section is identified by its source Gospel in brackets:

[Matt] = Matthew

[Mark] = Mark

[Luke] = Luke

[Matt / Mark], **[Matt / Luke]**, **[Mark / Luke]**, or **[Matt / Mark / Luke]** = parallel passages

The translation throughout is the **American Standard Version (ASV, 1901)**, a public domain text of high scholarly accuracy. No words are invented or paraphrased; all text is drawn directly from the ASV.

Chronological ordering follows the scholarly consensus of A.T. Robertson's *A Harmony of the Gospels* (1922), Kurt Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, and Orville Daniel's *A Harmony of the Four Gospels* (2nd ed., 1996).

Part Five: The Sabbath Controversy, the Twelve, and the Sermon Continued

Section 50 — The Man with the Withered Hand [Mark 3:1–6 / Luke 6:6–11]

And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there who had his hand withered. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

And he saith unto the man that had his hand withered, Rise and stand forth in the midst. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored.

And the Pharisees went out, and straightway with the Herodians took counsel against him, how they might destroy him.

Section 51 — Withdrawal to the Sea; Great Multitudes Healed [Mark 3:7–12]

And Jesus with his disciples withdrew to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and from Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and beyond the Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things he did, came unto him. And he spake to his disciples, that a little boat should wait on him because of the crowd, lest they should throng him: for he had healed many; insomuch that as many as had plagues pressed upon him that they might touch him.

And the unclean spirits, whensoever they beheld him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he charged them much that they should not make him known.

Section 52 — The Appointment of the Twelve [Mark 3:13–19 / Luke 6:12–16]

And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles:

Simon, whom he also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Section 53 — The Sermon on the Mount: On Almsgiving [Matt 6:1–4]

Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

Section 54 — The Sermon on the Mount: On Prayer [Matt 6:5–8]

And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Section 55 — The Lord's Prayer [Matt 6:9–15]

After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Section 56 — The Sermon on the Mount: On Fasting [Matt 6:16–18]

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee.

Section 57 — Treasure in Heaven [Matt 6:19–21]

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.

Section 58 — The Lamp of the Body [Matt 6:22–23]

The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!

Section 59 — No Man Can Serve Two Masters [Matt 6:24]

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Section 60 — On Anxiety: The Birds and the Lilies [Matt 6:25–34]

Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment?

Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?

And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Appendix: Notes on Chapter Six

On the Sabbath Healing and the Hardening of Hearts

The healing of the man with the withered hand (Section 50) is one of five sabbath controversy narratives in the Synoptics and represents a decisive escalation of the conflict with the Pharisees. What is theologically decisive is a detail found only in Mark: Jesus looks at his opponents "with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart." This is one of the very few places in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus's emotional state is described with such precision. The Greek word for "hardening" is *pōrōsis* (πώρωσις) — a medical term meaning the callus that forms over a broken bone, rendering it insensible. The Pharisees have watched a man suffer with a withered hand and have used his suffering as a legal trap. The anger Jesus feels is not petulance; it is the grief of someone who sees human beings more committed to their religious system than to human welfare.

The immediate consequence of the healing is the first formal conspiracy against Jesus's life: the Pharisees go out and take counsel with the Herodians — a remarkable coalition of religious conservatives and political supporters of the Herodian dynasty, groups normally antagonistic to one another — united by their common interest in removing Jesus.

On the Night of Prayer Before Choosing the Twelve

Luke alone records that before choosing the twelve apostles, Jesus spent the entire night in prayer on the mountain (Section 52). This is characteristic of Luke's consistent emphasis on Jesus's prayer life — he is the evangelist who most frequently notes Jesus withdrawing to pray. The night of prayer before a decision of this magnitude is presented without commentary; Luke simply records it and moves immediately to the morning appointment. The implication is left for the reader: the constitution of the apostolic community was not an administrative decision but a matter brought to God through the night.

The list of the Twelve appears in all three Synoptics and in Acts 1:13. The lists agree on all twelve names but differ slightly in order. All four lists divide into three groups of four with the same names consistently heading each group: Peter always first, Philip always fifth, James son of Alphaeus always ninth. Judas Iscariot always appears last, always with the notation that he became a traitor or betrayed Jesus.

On the Three Pillars of Jewish Piety

Matthew 6 (Sections 53–56) addresses the three foundational practices of Second Temple Jewish piety in a single structured unit. Each is treated with an identical three-part formal pattern: (1) the negative example of the hypocrites who perform the practice publicly for human approval; (2) the declaration that such practitioners "have received their reward" — a commercial term (*apechō*, ἀπέχω, used on ancient receipts meaning "paid in full"); and (3) the positive command to perform the practice in secret before the Father who sees in secret and will recompense.

The word "hypocrites" (*hypokritai*, ὑποκριταί) in Greek originally referred to stage actors — those who perform a role for an audience. Jesus's use of the word is precise: the problem is not

the practice of almsgiving, prayer, or fasting but the transformation of these practices into performances for human approval. When the audience changes from God to men, the reward changes correspondingly: human admiration is what was sought, human admiration is all that is received.

On the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer as given in Matthew 6:9–13 (Section 55) is the fuller of the two New Testament versions. Luke's version (Luke 11:2–4), given in response to a disciple's direct request to teach them to pray, is shorter and slightly different in wording. Most scholars regard the two as variations of the same prayer taught on different occasions.

The prayer divides naturally into two halves. The first half concerns God — the hallowing of his name, the coming of his kingdom, the doing of his will on earth as in heaven. The second half concerns human need — daily bread, forgiveness of debts conditioned on the forgiveness of others, and deliverance from temptation and the evil one.

The Greek word translated "daily" (*epiousios*, ἐπιούσιος) is one of the rarest words in the entire Greek language — it appears nowhere else in ancient literature outside this prayer and its Lukan parallel. Its exact meaning remains debated: it may mean "for today," "for the coming day," "for subsistence," or "necessary for existence." Most translators follow the traditional "daily," which captures the sense of bread that meets the need of the present moment rather than surplus stored for security.

The conditional character of the forgiveness petition is striking and unique among the petitions: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Jesus immediately elaborates this condition after the prayer itself (verses 14–15), making the forgiveness of others the stated condition for receiving God's forgiveness. This is the only petition in the prayer given an explicit explanatory extension, underscoring its weight in Jesus's ethical teaching.

On Treasure, the Eye, and Mammon

The three brief sayings of Sections 57–59 form a connected argument about the relationship between the heart and material possessions. The first locates the heart wherever the treasure is — a psychological observation as much as a theological command. The second uses the ancient understanding of the eye as the organ through which light enters the person: if the eye is "single" (*haplous*, ἁπλοῦς — which also carries the meaning "generous" or "undivided in loyalty") the whole body is illuminated; if the eye is "evil" (*ponēros*, πονηρός — which also carries the meaning "stingy" or "grasping") the whole interior is dark. The connection to wealth is deliberate: a miserly eye darkens the whole person.

The third makes the logical conclusion unavoidable: divided loyalty between God and wealth is structurally impossible. The Aramaic word *mammon* (מָמוֹן) left untranslated in both Matthew and Luke does not mean money in general but specifically wealth regarded as a value in itself, wealth elevated to the status of a master. Jesus does not say that wealth is evil; he says it cannot be served alongside God.

On Anxiety and the Lilies of the Field

The teaching on anxiety (Section 60) is the climax of Matthew 6 and one of the most personally directed passages in the Sermon on the Mount. The Greek word translated "anxious" (*merimnaō*, μεριμνάω) means literally to have the mind divided or pulled apart — anxiety as a condition of mental fragmentation, pulling the person between the present and an imagined threatening future.

Jesus does not command the suppression of all practical care; he commands a reordering of priorities rooted in the Father's provision. The two illustrations move from the lower to the higher: birds are fed without sowing or reaping; wildflowers are clothed more gloriously than Solomon in all his royal splendor. The argument from lesser to greater — the standard rabbinic form — concludes: if God clothes the grass that is here today and burned tomorrow, how much more will he clothe his own children?

The chapter's concluding command — "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" — is the positive summary of the entire chapter's teaching. The kingdom of God and his righteousness are to occupy the place that anxiety about food and clothing occupies in the ordinary human consciousness. The final word is both realistic and gently ironic: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Tomorrow will bring its own difficulties; the disciple need not import them into today.

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