

Surrendering to mercy (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21)

Trust and treasure, trust and treasure

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Matthew 6 circles around the ideas of trust and treasure.

Since God sees us, we no longer need to labor with such grueling effort to make sure that we are “seen by others.” Further, much of Jesus’ sermon finds its punch in this one line Jesus offers: “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” How do these ancient Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (practices Jesus refers to in this reading) help us with these twin concerns of trusting and treasuring God?

Treasure. With giving, we defy and defame one of the gods of our age: money. Relinquishing control of our finances, we affirm that our heart yearns for God more than for economic security. With prayer, we pursue our truest desire (even if we *feel* disconnected from it): to encounter the living God. With fasting, we practice in our body the truth that we crave God above every other desire. These concrete practices allow us to shape and nurture the deepest desires of our soul.

Trust. With giving, we release our stranglehold on our bank account, enacting our faith that God cares for both our needs and the needs of our neighbors. With prayer, we entrust the deep aches of our soul, and the pain of our world, to a God who has promised to one day make all things right. With fasting, we profess with our body that our very existence depends on God.

Concrete spiritual acts (like giving or fasting) are essential because they provide us opportunities to surrender the illusion that we are in control of our future. With these disciplines, we affirm that we are trusting God with our life. And these practices are especially powerful during Lent, the days when we are also trusting God with our death.

Marked with ashes, we remember that our days are finite, that we are under God's mercy. From our first breath to the moment they toss dirt over our coffin, we trust God.