

Matthew 6:1-4 (NKJV)

1 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

We are now entering a new section of the Sermon on the Mount. I prepared this a week before Bob preached to us. I did not add or remove a single sentence since then.

Let's do a quick review to keep it in perspective.

Matt 5:3-12 was the beatitudes. This was the **description of a Christian** and the various **stages and processes** he goes through after his regeneration.

vs13-16 Shows us **what happens** to this Christian in the world. We see how he reacts to the world and how the world reacts to him.

Vs 17-48 deals with how the **Christian** is to **live** according to the law as opposed to the how the **Pharisees** taught it.

And we ended last week with the crescendo of **the calling** we have to **be perfect** like our Father in heaven is perfect.

What chapter 6 leads us into is something quite wonderful. It paints a picture for us of what the Christian life **really is** while walking through a world that presents us all kinds of difficulties.

The beauty of it is that it emphasizes **our relationship to God**. Every appeal is to **our walk in the presence of God**. The every "**why**" is answered by our **walk with God**. If we were to put a heading to chapter 6 I believe we would call it, **living in relationship to Christ**.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The **directly spiritual** parts, the religious parts, and the **mundane day to day life** on the planet parts.

I think every Christian reaches a place where he wrestles with the place of both. Haven't we all, at times, felt like we wish we could drop every mundane daily life activity in order to do the "important" things? And those would be things like prayer, studying God's word, doing acts of service in Jesus's name, those sorts of things, watching spiritual media, learning spiritual things.

Haven't we all felt at times that those are really the important things. Those are the spiritual things.

But Jesus addresses the **mundane** and adds meaning to them as well. He does not teach that His followers should all join communes and take themselves out of society. He teaches **faithfulness** in the **mundane**. And let's face it, for most of us life is more lived in the mundane tasks than in the spiritual tasks.

Guys, how many hours have you spent doing work to provide for your family? And then how many hours have you spent keeping your family running, providing, improving and repairing houses and cars and yards and finances. Should we repent of all that. Well Jesus does not appear to say so. We will get to that later on in our study.

And mothers and wives, how much of your lives have been spent doing mundane things. Carla tells me that I would have never made it as a wife because I want a **change in work** every few years. And she maintains that her work had a certain kind of constancy and consistency and predictability that would be hard on a person like me. And I am sure it is true. Many of you ladies, no matter what paths you choose, know all about mundane. How many meals have you prepared? How many floors have you swept? How many diapers have you changed? And how do you think those who depended upon you to do those things would have felt if you abandoned those responsibilities to only do "spiritual things?"

When God provided the curse, **God mandated the mundane**. And if we are to live a faithful life, it is going to be a combination of the **spiritual tasks** and the **mundane tasks**. And what we will find is that all of them can be done as an act of **faith**, an act of **spiritual service and worship**. And that the division of spiritual and mundane is not as great as we may have thought. In fact, they are all part of being Holy as God is Holy.

So we have this good teaching to look forward to in Chapter 6.

Now I have a question for us this morning. Do we want to know ourselves?

Do we really want to know ourselves? To know why we do what we do?

Sometimes I get concerned that I focus so much on the inner self when I preach. I talk so much about the slippery self, the hearts that are the trickiest people we know. I know I generally do not say good things about our natural tendencies, our default tendencies.

But read chapter 6. I strongly urge you this week to read chapter 6 a couple of times at least. And answer this question, **what is Jesus warning us against?** See if you don't come to the same conclusion as I do. He is warning us about **our hearts**. He is warning us about how we can successfully keep all the evil

and ugliness about ourselves hidden while we try to succeed at spiritual things. It is about that inner struggle to be inwardly and outwardly congruent, true, honest. It is a focus on motives, which is by definition internal.

Now it seems to me that if Jesus focuses so much on it, it must be a real problem to be overcome. Doesn't that make sense?

Why was Jesus so negative.

When you pray, **don't** do it like the hypocrites.

When you pray, **don't** just babble batta batta batta.

When you pray, **don't** do it with an unforgiving heart.

When you fast, **don't** do that for the wrong motives.

Don't live trusting in what you can provide for yourself.

Don't think that you provide your own security.

Watch your eyes, your processing of information. How you think affect everything.

Watch **who** you are really loyal to in your heart of hearts. You can't serve two masters.

Do not **worry**. Wow is there anything more deeply rooted in our secret thoughts than that? Isn't that always a battle in the inner self?

Tell me this. When you read what Jesus said, do you get the idea that **living this way** is going to come naturally, or do you get the idea it is going to be a **battle**?

I remember some of the talks I had with the kids. I remember telling them that your biggest problem is not outside you. The problem you need to get good at wrestling with is the one inside you. The **old man** that is the biggest problem isn't **this** old man, the one outside you. The biggest problem isn't the old man outside of you making you do things you don't want to do. The biggest problem is **your** old man, **the one inside you**. And the one **inside you** is what makes getting along with the one **outside you** so difficult.

Do we want to know ourselves like God knows us. Mr. Jones says this:

The natural man evades self-examination because to know one's self is ultimately the most painful piece of knowledge that a man can ever acquire.¹

And really, why push to know ourselves? Why look at those things that are hard to look at? No one sees them? We can just as easily present **pleasant optimistic theories** about why we do as we do, as the **deeply examined truth** of our behavior. We can just as easily say I am earning money because it

¹ Lloyd-Jones, D. M. (1976). [*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*](#) (Second edition, p. 327). England: Inter-Varsity Press.

is the faithful thing to do as say I have a problem with trusting God and I feel compelled to provide my own security. Why push to see the uncomfortable? While we are talking about this, do we see that the **assumption** in what Jesus said is that we are **prone** to dishonesty. Do we see that we are **prone** to hypocrisy? We are **prone** to presenting ourselves one way as opposed to another?

Have we considered the implications of this?

Have you ever had someone suspect you of wrong motives or duplicitous behavior and you responded by being offended and hurt by saying **“You should know me better than that? You should know I would never do such a thing.”** This effectively blames the person asking the question for having the question and relationally leverages them to silence the question and even apologize for posing it. It avoids ever having to answer the question. It is effective, but it avoids truth.

Does that look like honest communication when we consider what Christ says? We are tricky. And we can expect tricky **to come out of us** because **it is in us**.

Look how Paul responded when people questioned **his** motives. He may have been hurt and angry, but he gives a defense for what is true about him. He does not use a relational power play to avoid answering the accusation. That is our model to follow. Imagine if when Paul approached Peter or when Nathan approached David or when Paul challenged some behaviors at his churches if the people would have said, **“How could you even think that about me?” “I cannot believe you don’t know me better than that.”** Do you see what I mean? The truth is that we do not even **know ourselves** better than that? We **should** think that we are always capable of all kind of evil actions and behaviors. That is the only way we can get to the truth. We cannot **assume** we would not have done an evil thing or done something for an evil reason. We are tricky. If we love truth, if we love Christ, if we want to truly serve Him, introspection is a way of life. So when someone brings something to our attention, even if it hurts or feels like it is uncalled for, the highest thing is to consider exactly what is said and to look deeply to see if there is any truth in it. The right thing is not to allow our hurt feelings or our hurt pride to craft our response, a response sure to silence the questioner. We also need to consider, God sees all our interactions. He knows what we think when we give an answer. Even if we get away with a relational thuggery or deception, even if we can get the inquiring hound on a completely different trail, God sees it. He knows what we are doing. And while we may set **each other** at bay, the **hound of heaven** always follows the right trail. The truth is

that the precious fellowship that is so sweet among believers will only grow to the degree that we are honest with ourselves and each other. So we **deprive ourselves of that which we so deeply need** when we chose to protect ourselves from seeing or telling the truth.

We always have to ask the question, "Why did I really do that thing?" None of us have reached the Jesus state of being where we know something is good because we did it. So when we are questioned, we must be careful. We need to choose a path that answers the questions rather than divert the attention elsewhere.

So is this self analysis really necessary? Is it really necessary to see the real? Won't it hurt?

Well, yeah. Of course it is and of course it will. But it is the only path to applying the truths that Jesus gives us. In everything Christ tells us to take off, He turns right around and tells us what to put on. But if we cannot admit that, in our heart of hearts, we are doing that which needs taken off, how will we ever apply his medicine? The truth sets us free. The truth **of ourselves** drives us to the truth of **Christ's provision**. And the application of His truth sets us gloriously and joyfully free of our own limitations. And that is where we are intended to live.

OK, so what we have before us is a ride of Jesus challenging us to consider why we do what we do. And if we see **wrong reasons** that we are doing good things, we should **conform them** to the **right** reasons for doings the **right** things.

That is what we should prepare ourselves for. Be ready to see things about yourself that you don't want to see. And be ready to accept the wonderfully freeing medicine of our great physician to heal our souls.

Now let's look at verse 1 of Chapter 6

1 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them.

From what I have read there might be a better translation than charitable deeds. And that is based on two different source texts that used two different words

The source text for the ESV version uses the word-
Dikaiosynē- Righteousness

The source text for the NKJV version uses the word
Eleēmosynē- Alms, Charitable Deeds

While these are similar, I tend to prefer the accuracy of the ESV version. And it leads more to what Jesus appeared to be doing here. In verse 1 Jesus is not limiting his scope. He is casting it wide. In verse 1 Christ is about to lay out the topic of the chapter.

So let's read it from the ESV

Matthew 6:1 (ESV)

¹ "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

When we look at this in terms of righteousness, in terms of **living out our lives** in right relationship with God and **doing things** because we think they will please Him, now we have the theme for the whole chapter. And with this translation, verse 1 is a broad heading and verse 2 begins a subtopic within that heading. Verse 1 is talking about **righteous practices** as a whole. Verse 2 moves into **charitable deeds**.

We are going to learn how we **SHOULD** practice righteousness and how we **should not**.

We will see this throughout all Chapter 6. And we will see this in those things that are most directly spiritual and those things that are day to day worldly responsibilities.

Now what is this **really talking about**? What is this chapter **about**?

It is about doing the right things, things that look spiritual, things that look right, things that other Christians would say, wow, look how admirable that person is. Look how spiritual they are. Look how they are an example of spirituality. Look how they love Christ. Look at how devoted they are to Jesus.

That is the effect intended by the **actions**. That is what the effect of the actions is intended to create. So they won't **look** like selfish things. They won't **look** like sinful things. None of the righteous things being done with this wicked motive will be **bad** things. They will all be good. They will all appear like an **admirable devotion**. They will all look wholly Christian.

But what does Jesus say about them?

Look at this closely.

IF the motive for doing these truly good things is "in order to" be seen by other human beings, if the reason is for it to be **recognized** by other humans as being admirable and spiritual, if it is in any way to get **the recognition and admonition and praise** of another human being. If that is the motive. If this action would not have been carried out if there were no audience. If no one

was watching, it would not have been done. If that is the case, the thing done is a zero in God's book. There will be **zero** reward for such a thing.

Wow. We need to think about this. Is there anything that we have done for God that if no one was watching we would not have done?

That is the million dollar question.

What do you think you have done for Christ lately? For me, I am preaching on Sundays and a few other things. What are you doing? The question is, what would you do if no one at all **recognized** your contribution? What would you think if others **did not honor you** for what you were doing? Or even worse if they spoke disparagingly about what you were doing? What if the leadership or the ones you served did not appreciate it? What if no one thanked you? Would you keep doing it because you are doing it for Christ? That is the question here.

Ultimately the question is, why do you do what you do in service for Christ? And would you keep doing it if no one approved of it?

Maybe at this point we should ask, what makes you want to quit what you are doing? Is your temptation to quit based on the lack of recognition that you get for what you are doing? Do you feel like quitting because no one is telling you how great what you are doing is?

We need to think about this. We need to consider it.

If I study most Saturdays and preach most Sundays because I want you to think I am somehow special, I will receive no reward for what I do. That is what this is saying. It doesn't matter how many hours I study or what things I sacrifice. If I am not doing it for God and for God alone, I am wasting my time. I may or not be wasting your time, depending upon what I say. But I am wasting my time.

Do you see what this is saying?

Each of us need to look deeply at what we do. Oh we might not have those loving feelings we wish we had toward Christ. We may not feel the sentimental warmth we think we should have. But down deep, what drives us to do the right thing? **Does it have anything to do with who is watching?** Does what we do change if no one is watching or if someone is watching? Well essentially whatever change there is, based on who is watching, will not be rewarded because it was not for Jesus.

Here is the question for the week. I do not think we really need to go further. I know this is a shorter sermon than usual but I think it is extremely important.

What good thing would we stop doing for Christ if no human being saw it or would applaud it?

What bad thing would we do if we knew that no human being would see it or condemn it?

They are both the same question. What do we do for Christ and for Christ alone?

Those are the only things that count.

What do you do for the church that no one notices and the fact that no one notices makes you angry? Guess what. It is very likely that there is no reward for that thing from God.

Is that harsh? Check out what Christ says. Does it mean that or doesn't it? Your motivation determines your reward.

That is what it means.

Do you realize how many of the church's problems go away when everyone does every act of service to the church only to please Jesus? There is none of this- "no one appreciates what I do." "My ministry is not recognized or appreciated". "I was left out in the thank you's".

When every act of ministry is done because we believe Jesus wants it done and we are thrilled to serve Him, suddenly all the bickering and complaints go away. Oh we might recognize that we do not always treat each other the way we should. But the fuel for division is suddenly gone. The us against them is removed. The fuel for indignation is removed.

That is really what Jesus is saying here.

There are to be no fleshly motives for ministry in the church. That is the essence of it. You might serve in all kinds of worldly clubs and expect that you better reward every act of service. The social clubs do all kind of benevolent services. But you better reward those who sacrifice their time and effort with fleshly strokes. But the church of Christ is different. And it is a supernatural difference. Everyone here is to be doing exactly what they are doing for no other reason than that their Savior and Master, Jesus Christ is pleased with what they are doing.

That is, well, weird in the world's way of looking at it. But it is completely normal for the Church.

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