

We have been working line by line through Jesus' first and longest teaching, "The Sermon on the Mount."

When the teaching was given, Jesus only had four disciples and a crowd of people following Him.

The "Sermon on the Mount" is a detailed description of the expectations of a disciple of Jesus.

We've studied the Beatitudes – the heart work that God wants to do in our life so that we can live like Rabbi Jesus in this world.

We've looked at Jesus' perspective and expectations regarding anger, adultery, lust, divorce, and keeping your word

We've looked at animosity, hostility, and broken relationships, retaliation, getting even

Last week love your enemies – *"I will not be the enemy of my enemies."*

With the start of what we refer to as Matthew 6
Starts an entire new train of thinking
Runs right through Matthew 6

The focus of Jesus' teaching through the next portion of the Sermon on the Mount is:

Living a Beatitude life in the presence of God, in submission to God and in dependence upon God.

Living as a spiritual beggar, who grieves over my sin, who is no better or more important than anyone else, who is committed to doing the right things with the right heart ...

Living that way in the presence of God, in submission to God and in dependence upon God.

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

Jesus lays out the overarching idea that he wants his followers to understand as he begins to teach about living in the presence of God, in submission to God and in dependence upon God.

The overarching principle

“Don’t do what you do for show!”

“Don’t do what you do to impress people!”

Jesus says to “Be careful” or “Watch out” or “Be on guard”

There is a propensity in every one of us to one degree or another – We want to be seen

Little kid: “Watch Me” – “Mommy you’re not watching me!”

With smart phones the “watch me” is the selfie

Everyone wants to be someone important
I want people to pay attention
“Now they’ll notice me!”

Jesus

A “Beatitude Disciple” is not to do things to be seen

A “Beatitude Disciple” lives to **bring glory to God alone**

The glory of God was the focus of Jesus’ life here on earth

- Jesus didn’t live for His glory
- Jesus lived entirely for the Glory of God.
- Jesus did what he did and said what he said so that his Father would be glorified.

“Father, glorify your name!” (John 12:28 NIV)

The Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit doesn’t work and speak and guide for His Glory
- The HS does what He does and says what He says to Glorify Jesus
- Jesus ... Glorifies His Father.

“The Spirit will bring glory to me by taking my message and telling it to you.” (John 16:14 CEV)

A disciple of Rabbi Jesus has no option but to seek that God is honored in every area.

Jesus said: “Beware not to be seen by others.”

One of the questions that every disciple must answer is “Am I going to please me or am I going to please Jesus?”

Sometimes people describe themselves or other people describe them as a “People Pleaser.”

A “people pleaser” spends their strength doing what people want them to do ... Pleasing people.

Pleasing people might seem like a good thing ... The ultimate “customer service.”

Often the root of pleasing people is not serving or keeping the peace

Often, the motive of the “People Pleaser” is not serving or pleasing others or keeping the peace.

- I want to be accepted – If I please them I will be accepted
- I want approval - If I please them I will be approved of
- I want recognition
- I want someone to notice me
- I want power

“Man desires the praise of man more than the praise of God.”
David Martin Lloyd Jones

Jesus could illustrate how people do righteous deeds to be seen in 1,000 different ways.

He illustrates the idea with three different areas

“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 left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Don't give to be seen

Give in secret and your Father, WHO SEES IN SECRET, will reward you

Regardless of why a “Beatitude Disciple” gives it should be done without a desire to be seen

- If I give because God prompted me ... I need to make sure that the desire to be seen doesn't find it's way into my heart.
- If I give out of compassion ... I need to make sure that the desire to be seen is dealt with
- If I give because there is a need and I can do something about it ... I need to guard my heart

What is my heart thinking about when I give?

Am I hoping that other people see or find out what I gave?

“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.” Mark 12:41-44 (NIV)

When someone gives to be seen the act of generosity ends up being an act of vanity.

“The hypocrites” – Impersonators

They pretend to be generous - when they give — — it looks like generosity

BUT their giving is done for applause

Don't let your RH know what your LH and doing

When you give are you giving in hopes that your LH will know what your RH is doing?

When you give do so with such anonymity that your LH won't know what your RH is doing.

“Don't tell others and don't tell yourself.”

REWARD

“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 left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Whether a disciple is praised by men or praised by God there is a reward for the disciple.

If a disciple lives to be seen, to please people, the praise that they receive from the one they pleased is the disciple’s reward.

If a disciple lives for an “audience of one” their reward comes from the Father.

“If you receive your reward from people there will be no reward from your Father.” Unknown

I can do the same “righteous” deed and one time receive a “human” reward and another time receive a “divine” reward.

Illustration

Let’s say a collection is taken for some need one month and you give hoping someone will notice your gift – they see you give and that is your reward - You receive a human reward ... that’s it.

The next month a collection is taken for a need and you give and your heart’s desire is to please Jesus – You receive a divine reward.

The overall principle that Jesus teaches is – Don't do your righteous deeds "to be seen."

Instead do what you do to bring honor and glory to God.

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:1-6 NIV)

Don't pray to be seen

Pray in secret and your Father, WHO SEES IN SECRET will reward you.

Jesus doesn't say that prayers spoken in public ... to be seen by others won't be answered

Jesus doesn't say that prayers spoken in secret ... will be answered

The prayer spoken "to be seen by others" could be answered and the prayer spoken in secret might not be answered

The difference between "to be seen by others" prayer and "in secret" prayer is the reward.

The reward for "to be seen prayers" is that they were seen and heard.

The reward for “in secret prayer” is given by our Father

Think about your LH and your RH when praying

The human heart can get so twisted that I can pray in secret and get proud about my praying

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about this kind of a twisting that can happen in our hearts

“It is even more pernicious if I turn myself into a spectator of my own prayer performance ... I can lay on a very nice show for myself even in the privacy of my own room.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, 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 others 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.” (Matthew 6:16-18 NIV)

If you’re not familiar with the practice of fasting

Fasting is not dieting, cleansing, balancing the body

Fasting is saying “NO” to something to say YES to something else

“NO” to food ... so I can pray

“NO” to entertainment ... so I can say yes to something Jesus is asking of me

When people were fasting they made sure that other people knew what they were doing

They fasted to be seen

Act somber and disfigure their faces

Fasting is a “denial of self” for some greater purpose

Fasting and hoping that people see is incongruent

How can I deny myself while hoping people will see me denying myself?

Don't let people know when you are fasting

Don't fast so that people will see and know

Instead groom yourself

Don't let others know that you are fasting

Disciples who fast and letting others know ... are rewarded by others knowing

Fasting and not letting others know ... brings a reward from our Father

Giving, praying and fasting in secret fights against and works to break the grip that the need for human approval has on us.

Praying is good and right – but it can be done with a heart that is wrong – TO BE SEEN

Giving/generosity is good and right – but it can be done with a wrong heart – TO BE SEEN

Fasting is good and right– but it can be done with a wrong heart – TO BE SEEN

Jesus talked to the disciples and the crowd about giving, prayer and fasting

He could have said “Worship but don’t do it to be seen”

“Serve, but don’t do it to be seen.”

“Lead, but don’t do it to be seen.”

Talk about the other side of this subject

- Jesus is not saying never give publicly
- Jesus is not saying to only pray in private
- Jesus is not saying “Don’t let anyone know that you are fasting.”

If you think back a month ago we read that Jesus said:

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16 NIV)

So, which is it?

Give, pray and fast in secret so that only God sees OR let people see my “good deeds?”

BOTH

Jesus served in public and in secret

Jesus prayed in public and in secret

Jesus fasted in public and in secret

We're told to pray together

We're told to give and share with each other and meet needs

The Bible gives a variety of pictures of God's people fasting together

The question is not about people seeing or not seeing

The principle is about motive

Don't do to be seen!

Paradox ---- Give and pray and fast so that people see but don't do it to be seen!

The paradox is about MOTIVE ----- Why?

To glorify God OR personal glory?

For love? For approval? For applause? For recognition? For

Power?

Here's some homework

Practice Giving in secret

Practice Praying in secret

Practice Fasting in secret