

Sermon on the Mount – Giving and Prayer

Mathew 6:1-15 (introduced 8/2/16)

These passages in chapter 6 expand the idea in v.5:20 which said that except our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we won't enter the kingdom of heaven. A hypocrite is a "play actor", in the Greek theatre he wore a mask hiding who he really was. These scriptures address how one gives alms and how one prays (fasting is addressed in verses 16-18). The word alms comes from a word meaning pity, compassion. Alms is anything given to relieve the poor, as money, food, clothing... The word "alms" does not appear in the Old Testament, but the equivalent Hebrew word used is "righteousness"

v.1,2 – describes hypocrites who give alms to be recognized by men, so they make a lot of noise when they give. They figuratively sound the trumpet to draw attention to themselves. They make sure they are seen in public places, giving, so that one may praise their piety and righteousness. The temple had 13 chests with an opening to place contributions in. Hypocrites converted their gift into the largest number of coins possible so it would make a lot of noise when they dropped it in. They have no reward from God, they have received their reward from man.

v.3,4 – We give blessing and benevolence with our right hand, and our left should not know what our right is doing. We are giving so quickly, generously that we can't keep up. We don't try. We just do it. We don't do it to be praised by men, and we don't praise ourselves within ourselves. We give not to receive reward, even from God, but we give because we love the Lord, who rewards us. He rewards us here on earth, and will reward us in glory. (Luke 6:38)

v.5-8 – Don't pray to be seen as those who stand in synagogues and on street corners, so that those around them may praise them for being righteous. The Pharisees prayed at 6am, 9am, 12 noon, and 3pm. Pray to be heard by God, praying from the heart. Public prayer is fine done in the right spirit, but we should also pray privately (v.6), building our relationship with the Lord, our strength in Him. Our public prayer should be informed by our private prayer life. And the words prayed must be uttered sincerely and with understanding, not vain repetitions, or recited with no "heart" investment. God knows what we need already. Our asking shows our dependence on God for every need. This honors Him and strengthens our relationship with Him.

v.9-13 – this is known commonly as the Lord's Prayer, but really is the disciples' prayer. Although we recite it, this was really given as a guide to help the disciples know what elements to include regular prayer. In Luke 11, the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray as John taught his disciples to pray. In the prayer are elements of worship (Our Father, hallowed is your name), submission to God as well as desire for His ultimate reign over all things, supplication for needs, request for forgiveness (as we forgive others), requests for help in every challenge and temptation of life and from evil that would come against us, praise in God's power and glory.

v.14,15 – We ask for forgiveness from God; we should forgive others. When we forgive, our heart is in a place to understand and receive the forgiveness of God.