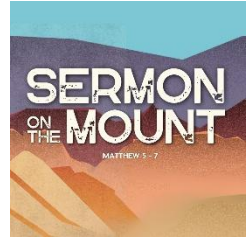


The Sermon on the Mount: Give, Pray, Fast

Lesson 10: November 17th and 18th

Read Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18



Sermon Reflection Question: What captured your attention from Sunday's sermon?

Jesus now moves from his teaching about righteousness in relationships toward righteousness expressed through the practices of giving, praying, and fasting. Jesus warns about seeking external affirmation from others in these practices and instead promotes a life of secrecy and relationship with the Father.

1. In Matthew 6:1-4, Jesus gives a foundational warning about practicing "righteousness" before others.
 - a. Hypocrisy in the Sermon on the Mount does not simply mean saying one thing and doing another. How does Jesus define a "hypocrite" in terms of character, motivation, and reward?
 - b. Why is the desire to be seen and honored by other people so powerful? Where do you see that temptation in your own life, even in good deeds or religious activities?
2. Jesus uses generosity to the poor as his first case study of genuine devotion in Matthew 6:2-4. In regard to giving, what does Jesus mean by the metaphor "do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing"?
3. In Matthew 6:5-8, Jesus warns against praying like the hypocrites and the pagans.
 - a. Describe the critique Jesus gives of both the hypocrites and the pagans in this section?
 - b. What does Jesus reveal about the character of God when he promises that "your Father who sees in secret will reward you"?
 - c. What are subtle ways you may seek attention from others or use "empty words" in your prayers with God? Why do you think you do this?

4. Fasting in the Old Testament was often connected to repentance, mourning, and seeking God's guidance.
 - a. How does practicing fasting cultivate humility and character formation?
 - b. How can you discern if your motives for spiritual disciplines (like fasting, giving, or prayer) are rooted in seeking God's presence rather than seeking affirmation or control?

Ancient virtue ethics and modern self-improvement projects focus heavily on character formation. The goal is to become the kind of person a specific culture values and rewards.

5. How does Jesus' focus on internal motives (doing good for God alone) promote true virtue and integrity over culturally changing values?

Jesus repeats the phrase "your Father" throughout Matthew 6:1-18. In contrast to seeking recognition from people, Jesus directs his disciples toward the Father who sees what others do not see. Jesus does not tell his disciples to stop practicing righteousness. Instead, he teaches them to practice it with a different audience and a different motivation. The goal is not to build our own name or status, but to live faithfully before God.

6. What difference does it make to know that your heavenly Father sees what is done in secret? How might this change the way you think about doing good when nobody notices?
7. What is one area of your life where you may be tempted to seek recognition from others for something you do for God? What would it look like to redirect that desire toward God this week?
8. How can your life group and church family encourage one another toward deeper relational intimacy with God, rather than measuring spiritual maturity by public performance?

9. Why is performing good deeds or spiritual practices for human approval ultimately destructive to a community of Jesus-followers seeking personal spiritual transformation as well as to embody Kingdom values?

PRAY: Spend some time asking the Holy Spirit to reveal the motives beneath your good works. Where might God be inviting you to practice generosity, service, or obedience simply because you love Him and want to participate in His Kingdom, even if no one else sees it? How can you praise God that your Father sees what is done in secret?