

Jesus on Hypocrisy

Text: Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

Introduction: Have you ever stopped to think about how much we tend to care about what other people think of us?

Some of you are even doing it right now. You're sitting up straight. Looking at me. Maybe even holding your Bible.

Why?

Maybe it's because you're actually eager to hear from God's Word this morning. Praise God for that. Or maybe it's because you want me and the people around you to think that you're eager to hear from God's Word this morning.

Do you see the difference?

There's a word for the disconnect between who we really are and who we want other people to think we are. That word is hypocrisy. We know that a hypocrite is someone who pretends to be something he isn't.

The word originally referred to an actor who would put on a mask and play a character on stage. And that's a helpful picture of hypocrisy. A hypocrite puts on a mask. He presents one version of himself to other people while knowing that the reality under the mask is different.

The truth is that we are all hypocrites to some extent. We all play this game. We know how to say the right things. We know how to do the right things. And we know how to be seen saying and doing the right things.

But God sees right through the charade. He knows everything about us. He hears every word. He sees every action. And He knows every motive.

That's what Jesus shows us in our text this morning. Go ahead and turn in your Bible to Matthew 6. We are making our way through Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Today we're turning the page from Matthew 5 to

Matthew 6. You can find Matthew 6 on page 761 in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, we invite you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read Matthew 6:1-18...Pray)

Followers of Jesus avoid hypocrisy by practicing our righteousness for God's glory rather than the praise of people.

Remember that Jesus is speaking to His disciples and the crowd of people that had gathered to hear Him teach.

And in verse 1, He issues a warning. He says... (Read vs. 1)

Jesus then goes on to address three important pillars of first-century Judaism: giving, prayer, and fasting. First, giving...

I. Followers of Jesus give for God's glory (Matthew 6:1-4).

A. Notice that Jesus assumes that His followers will give to the needy.

- 1. He says, "WHEN you give to the needy."**
- 2. We saw last time in 5:42 where Jesus says, "Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you."**
- 3. The Bible is full of commands to assist the poor. Followers of Jesus recognize that giving to the needy is the rightful outworking of our faith in Jesus. Faith without works is dead. James wrote in his epistle, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27).**
- 4. As followers of Jesus, we give to the needy because we understand what God has done for us in Christ. We were the needy. Spiritual beggars. Without any hope in the world. And God intervened on our behalf. He gave us His Son. He saved us. He adopted us into His family. And He has given us an inheritance in eternity.**

5. We who are poor in spirit, now seek to meet the needs of those who are materially needy. We do so because of what God has done for us in Jesus.
6. Jesus wants you to give to the needy. In fact, He assumes that you will.

B. But He says that there is a way to give to the needy that is not pleasing to God and does not result in eternal reward.

1. This is fascinating. Because in a couple weeks, we're going to see where Jesus talks about treasures in heaven. That's what we want! Treasures in heaven! Where moths and rust do not destroy. Where thieves do not break in and steal.
2. But if you give to the needy with the wrong motive, there will be no reward in heaven.
3. Look at verse 2. (Read vs. 2)
4. Do you see that? Jesus isn't just concerned with what you do. He's also concerned with why you do it.
5. It is a good thing to give to the needy. But it is a bad thing to do it for your own glory. For the praise of other people. For them to look at you and say, "Oh, look how generous she is."
6. Do you know what doing that makes you? A hypocrite. That's what the hypocrites do, Jesus says. They sound a trumpet in the synagogues and the streets. Look at me. Look what I've done.
7. Truly, they have received their reward. What's their reward? The praise of man.

C. So, how do we give to the needy in a way that pleases God and results in reward in heaven?

1. Look at verses 3-4. (Read vs. 3-4a)
2. How do we give to the needy in a way that pleases God and results in reward in heaven? We give in secret. In fact, so secretive that even your left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing.

3. What does Jesus mean? Your left hand and your right hand share a brain. It's impossible for your left hand to not know what your right hand is doing. Jesus is not saying that you have to hide your left hand while your right hand is doing something nice for someone. The point Jesus is making is that we don't just need to beware of seeking praise from other people. We also need to beware of praising ourselves. Patting ourselves on the back
4. In fact, our hearts are so impacted by sin that we'll praise ourselves for giving in secret. I'm so spiritual. I do all these things for the needy. And no one ever knows.
5. Do you see how deceptive our hearts can be? It is possible for you to give large sums of money to the needy. All anonymously. No one ever knows but you. And yet you still run afoul of what Jesus teaches here in Matthew 6. Because it's not just about actions. It's about motive. It's about the heart.

D. Goshen, as followers of Jesus, we don't give for our own glory. We give for God's glory.

1. We give for the good of others and the glory of God.
2. We give because our hearts have been transformed by the gospel of Christ.
3. We give because we've received so much in Jesus that we can't help but give to others. And we don't care if anyone ever sees or knows or says "thank you."
4. Because we know that our Father who sees in secret will reward us. That's what Jesus says at the end of verse 4. "And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."
5. Goshen, I want you to know that God sees everything you do for Him. There's not anything that escapes His attention. Your tender care for one of our shut-ins. Your work to care for our church building and grounds. Your preparation to teach Sunday School. Your meeting with a church member for 1-1 discipleship. The card that you send. The meal you

prepare. Whatever it is. I may not ever see or know. I may not ever say “thank you.” No one else in this church may ever see or know or say “thank you.” But God sees. He knows. And He will reward you.

Followers of Jesus give for God’s glory.

II. Followers of Jesus pray for God’s glory (Matthew 6:5-8).

A. Notice that just as Jesus assumes His followers will give to the poor, He also assumes they will pray.

1. He says, “WHEN you pray.”
2. A prayerless Christian is an oxymoron. Followers of Jesus pray.
3. Next week we’re going to talk about the model prayer Jesus gave to His disciples to teach them how to pray.
4. We also know that Jesus Himself was devoted to prayer.
 - a. Mark 1:35 says of Jesus, “And rising very early in the morning while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”
 - b. Luke also writes of Jesus, “But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray” (Lk. 5:15-16).
 - c. And Luke 11:1 says, “Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray’” (Lk. 11:1).
5. Jesus Himself was devoted to prayer. And as His followers, we too ought to be devoted to prayer. If Jesus needed to commune with God the Father in prayer, how much more do we need that personal relationship with our heavenly Father through prayer?
6. Jesus wants you to pray. In fact, He assumes that you will.

B. But just like with giving, there is a way of praying that is not pleasing to God.

1. Isn’t that something? You can pray. A long prayer. A beautiful prayer. And yet God is not pleased.
2. In fact, Jesus says, prayer can make you a hypocrite.
3. Look at verse 5. (Read vs. 5)
4. Prayer is supposed to be about God. So, when we make it about ourselves, we reveal ourselves as hypocrites.
5. The hypocrites in Jesus’ day loved to pray in the synagogues and stand in the streets and pray. Why? Because they wanted to be seen by others. They wanted everyone to know how spiritual they were.
6. Goshen, there’s no reward in that. God doesn’t answer those kinds of prayers. In fact, He considers them a stench.

C. So, how should we pray?

1. Look at verse 6. (Read vs. 6)
2. Jesus says that we should pray in secret.
3. Jesus is not saying that we shouldn’t pray in public or when we gather for corporate worship on the Lord’s Day. Prayer is an important part of our gathering together as God’s people.
4. In fact, you can hypocritically refuse to pray in public for the same reason that someone else might love to pray in public. You’re concerned first and foremost about what other people think of you.
5. See, Jesus isn’t so much concerned with the location of our prayers. He’s concerned with the heart behind our prayers. Jesus is saying that prayer isn’t a show. It’s not about how long you pray. How eloquent your words are. Or who hears your prayer.
6. Public prayer shouldn’t be the only time you pray. It should be the overflow of your time with the Lord in the secret place.
7. Prayer is about God. It’s about us communing with Him as His children. It’s about us expressing our dependence on God.

8. Go to your room. Shut the door. And pray to your Father. Isn't that amazing? If you are in Christ, God is your Father. He has saved you by the blood of His Son. He has adopted you into His family. And now He invites you to meet Him in the secret place. To set aside all the distractions of the world. And talk directly to your Father who is in heaven.

D. And He will reward you!

1. Jesus says the same thing in verse 6 about prayer that He said in verse 4 about giving: "And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."
2. What kind of reward? Certainly, there is reward in heaven for those who grow in their relationship with God through prayer. But here, I think the reward Jesus is talking about has to include answered prayer.
3. God is a good Father. He loves to give good gifts to His children. So, when we come to Him with genuine hearts seeking Him and His work in our lives, He hears our prayers and He answers them according to His good purposes.
4. With five kids 13 and under, we have a very busy house. And I love doing things with my kids. Yesterday we were at the soccer field from 8:30am-2pm. But what I really love about spending time with my kids is the times when I am able to spend 1-1 time with them. Sometimes that's a big trip. Other times it's sitting in the recliner together in the morning before the day starts just enjoying being together.
5. Do you know that God is a good Father? He loves you. He cares about you as a person. He wants a relationship with you. He loves all His children. But He also loves you as an individual. He knows you. After all, He made you. He made you for relationship with Him.
6. What a privilege it is to be able to meet with God in the secret place. He's never too busy for you. He's never preoccupied by something else. He loves you. He cares about you. He wants to be with you. In some sense, that's the reward, isn't it? We get God. A relationship

with the God of the universe. The one who is sovereign over everything. The one who sustains the universe by the Word of His power. You get to call Him Father.

7. All because of Jesus. You've been brought near to God by the blood of His Son. You were far off. Separated from God because of your sin. But Jesus has brought you near to God.

E. Jesus says a bit more about prayer in verses 7-8. (Read vs. 7-8)

1. Some of you think that the way to get God to hear your prayer is to pray a really "good" prayer.
2. Goshen, God isn't looking for a good prayer. He wants your heart. He isn't concerned with the length of your prayer or the eloquence of it. He's concerned that you pray. He's concerned that you desire to be in relationship with Him. That you recognize your dependence on Him. That you seek Him in prayer.
3. I think my 3-year-old daughter Lydia's favorite word is "snack." She's often already asking for a snack by 8am before I've even left the house for work. You just had breakfast. Why do you need a snack? But do you know what she eventually gets? A snack. Why? Because who can resist a Lydi-bug? But before she can get a snack, we make sure that she speaks in complete sentences and pronounces all of the words right. Because the thing that is most important to us is that she says everything exactly as it should be said. Do you think that's how it goes? No, of course not! She's three! She asks for a snack with her three-year-old broken English, and she gets it because she is our daughter and we love her. We love to give good things to her. We love to provide for her needs. In fact, we know what she needs BEFORE she even asks!
4. Goshen, God is like that. But even better! He's not a genie. He's your Father! You don't have to rub a lamp or say things exactly the right way. There's no magic formula for prayer. No, He loves to give good gifts to His children. He loves to provide for our needs. He

doesn't care about how impressive your prayer is. It's not impressive! He cares about you. He loves you. He wants a relationship with you.

Followers of Jesus give for God's glory. Followers of Jesus pray for God's glory. And finally...

III. Followers of Jesus fast for God's glory (Matt. 6:16-18).

We're going to come back to the Lord's prayer next week. But I want to skip down to verses 16-18 before we conclude because we see the same thing about fasting that we've already seen about giving and prayer. (Read vs. 16-18)

A. Notice that just as Jesus assumes we will give and pray, He also assumes that we will fast.

- 1. "And WHEN you fast."**
- 2. Fasting is going without food and/or drink for the purpose of prayer and spiritual devotion (Akin, 88). It's a spiritual discipline that we don't often talk about.**
- 3. But fasting was a big deal in first century Judaism. Jewish fasting consisted of both corporate public fasts and individual fasts. The OT law required self-denial of all Israelites on the Day of Atonement. Fasts were also required for the Jewish New Year, anniversaries of particular tragedies in Jewish history, and during times of national crisis (Quarles, 224).**
- 4. I'll say more about fasting next week when we talk about prayer and fasting, but we should at least note this morning the assumption Jesus makes that His followers will fast.**

B. But just like giving and praying, there is a way to fast that is not pleasing to God and does not result in eternal reward.

- 1. Look at verse 16. (Read vs. 16)**

- 2. Jesus warns against hypocritical fasting. Fasting for show. So that others will look at you and take notice of how spiritual you are.**
- 3. Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."**

C. Instead, the kind of fasting God honors is fasting that is born of a genuine love for God and desire for intimacy with Him.

- 1. (Read vs. 17-18)**
- 2. Fasting is a way to remind yourself that man does not live by bread alone. Rather, you are completely dependent on God. He doesn't need you. You need Him. When you fast, you express your dependence on God in a very physical, tangible way.**
- 3. And God rewards. He sees. He knows. And He rewards.**

Conclusion: Giving, praying, and fasting are good works. We've just seen that all three of them should be done without seeking the applause of other people. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Now look back with me at Matthew 5:16.

Jesus says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

So, which is it? Should people see our good works? Or should we do our good works in secret? The answer depends on who you're doing them for.

Jesus isn't telling us that we have to hide every good thing we do. He's telling us that we shouldn't do good things to be seen by other people. There's a difference between people seeing your good works and doing good works so that people will see you. The issue is the heart.

In Matthew 5, people see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. But in Matthew 6, you do your good works so that people will give glory to you.

And that is the danger of hypocrisy. We can do the right things for the wrong reasons. We can seek our own glory by giving to the needy. We can pray in a way that seeks the praise of other people. We can fast for show rather than dependence on God.

And the scary thing is that the people around us may never know the difference. But God knows. He sees. Nothing escapes His attention.

So, whose glory are you living for? Yours? Or God's?

The truth is that we are all hypocrites to some extent, aren't we? So much of our lives are lived for the praise of man rather than the glory of God. Even our giving, and praying, and fasting. There's not one of us this morning who would want the people around us to see everything about us the way that God sees.

Yet, God has not abandoned you. He's not scared off by your hypocrisy. Instead, He gave His Son for you. He shows His love for you in that while you were still lost in hypocrisy and sin, Jesus died for you. To save you. To forgive you of your sin. Even your hypocrisy.

And to make you a new creation in Christ. So that you can give for God's glory. And pray for God's glory. And fast for God's glory. To do all for the glory of God.