

Where Your Treasure Is, There Your Heart Will Be Also

Introduction

In [Matthew 5:14-16](#) Jesus states “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Disciples of Christ are to live in such a way that their actions are seen before the world in order that they may see their good works and give glory to God.

However, here at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls for a different kind of action from his disciples.

Instead of doing good works to be seen by the world, Jesus calls his followers to act in secret so that others don't see their works.

This reason for this likely also harkens back to [Matthew 5](#).

In [Matthew 5:20](#) Jesus states that “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

When Jesus describes the actions of the hypocrites here in [Matthew 6](#), he is describing the actions of the scribes and Pharisees.

In these verses Jesus is teaching his disciples how they can live in such a way that their righteousness may exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

At the core of Jesus' teaching here is the question of who are you serving by your actions.

Jesus' teaching here aims at revealing who your god really is.

Who are your actions for.

Put another way, Jesus is calling us to consider who we consider to be our judge.

Are you looking for the judgement and approval of man?

Or are you looking for the judgement and approval of your Father in Heaven.

It isn't by accident that Jesus repeats the name “Father” 10 times in these verses.

Jesus calls his followers to not be hypocrites who serve men, but to be children who serve their Father.

With this in mind, I have divided this morning's sermon into three parts:

1. Don't be a hypocrite
2. Live as children of your heavenly Father
3. Lay up your treasure in Heaven

Don't Be a Hypocrite

In [Matthew 6](#) Jesus speaks about three types of religious practice: Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.

Each of these practices were assumed to be normative within first century Jewish practice and Jesus assumes that his follower will continue to do these things.

However, with each of these practices Jesus condemns the way hypocrites perform them.

The root of the issues is that the hypocrites practice their righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.

When hypocrites give alms to the needy, Jesus says that they do so in order to be praised by others.

They sound a trumpet in order that they may be praised by others.

When the hypocrite prays, he loves to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, again that he may be seen by others.

And, when the hypocrite fasts, he makes sure to look gloomy and disfigure his face in order that others may notice their fasting.

The Praise of Men

What Jesus highlights about these ungodly practices is that they are performed for the praise of men.

But what is particularly interesting here is that Jesus acknowledges that they get the reward they are seeking.

Hypocrites who practice their righteousness before men receive the praise of men.

They want the praise and recognition of their fellow man and that is the reward that they get when they practice their righteousness in this way.

Note that what Jesus condemns here is the reward, not that they are seeking a reward.

Jesus condemns this kind of righteousness because it seeks the *wrong reward*.

It seeks the reward of being praised by men, instead of the reward of the Father's approval.

Jesus' criticism of the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees is that it seeks such a small treasure.

It settles for the praise and glory that comes from man instead of seeking that glory that comes from God.

As Jesus says in [John 5:44](#)

John 5:44 *ESV*

⁴⁴ How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

Jesus wants you to seek after a reward.

He's calling you to seek out the right one!

Conscription of Religious Practices

Commenting on this passage, theologian Alastair Roberts notes how Jesus shows how easily religious practices can get conscripted into the activities of social display.

Jesus shows how religious practices get used to broadcast virtue or mark out who you are associated with.

This is what happens when religious practices are done before others.

The practices themselves easily become hijacked by the desire to win the applause and approval of certain people.

Thought is given to the approval of certain people with our religious practices, but little thought is given to God's approval.

Roberts notes how this dynamic is especially acute in age of social media.

Notice how much attention Jesus gives to the *context* that our actions take place in.

Different contexts can lend themselves to virtue or vice

Roberts states that, "The danger so often is that we want to project an image of our relationship with God designed to maintain and manage our relationships with others. There is such a danger in the realm of spectacle. When we are seen by others, everything that we do will be done, not just for its own ends, but for how it will be received by others. Jesus challenges this at the very root."

So what is the solution?

Here Jesus instructs his followers to starve bad motivations by changing practices.

Just like in [Matthew 5](#), Jesus gets at *the heart* of our sin by calling attention to our *actions*.

If you don't want to be a hypocrite then *starve the motivation* to practice your righteousness for the praise of men.

You can't be tempted to receive the praise of man if you hide your righteousness from them.

Instead, you should seek to practice your righteousness before your heavenly Father.

Live as Children of Your Heavenly Father

You are called to practice righteousness, but you are called to do this before your Father in heaven.

The Fatherhood of God is front and center in this section.

I mentioned at the outset of my sermon that Jesus repeats the name "Father" ten times in this passage.

The way you practice a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees is by practicing your righteousness in secrete before the heavenly Father.

You must see your heavenly Father as your judge and the giver of heavenly rewards.

Giving

When you give, you should do so in secret.

Your generosity should be done in the overflow of God's generosity toward you.

Your giving should be about God.

Prayer

Likewise, your prayer should be mainly about God and done before him.

Notice how the Lord's Prayer begins with three petitions about God and his kingdom.

"Hallowed be thy name"

"Your Kingdom Come" and

"Your will be done."

But notice further how the next three petitions still focus on your heavenly Father:

When you ask your Father for daily bread, you acknowledge that God is the giver of all you need.

When you ask God for forgiveness, you acknowledge that you are in need of God's grace.

And when you ask God "not to lead you into temptation, but to deliver you from evil", you acknowledge your weakness and need of him.

If God does not keep you from the moment of testing and trial, you know you will fall.

You only stand because of God upholds you.

But also notice how all three of these petitions are specifically fulfilled in Christ in the gospels.

Jesus, who was himself the Bread of Life, depended upon his heavenly Father for sustenance during his earthly ministry.

What's more, the Bread of Life hungered so that we might feed upon him and be satisfied.

Jesus, also shows us the forgiveness of God.

He himself was without sin, and yet he was ever ready to forgive those who wrong him.

Even on the cross he prayed, "Father, forgive, for they know not what they do."

And Jesus was, of course, lead into to temptation and delivered into the hands of evil men for us.

Our prayers should focus on our heavenly Father all because of the gospel of the Father's Son who has saved us.

It is only as we live as children of God that we are able to practice righteousness before the heavenly Father.

And before teaching on fasting Jesus reiterates the most radical petition from the Lord's Prayer.

In verse 14-15 Jesus states it plainly,

Matthew 6:14-15 *ESV*

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Forgiveness is the opposite of practicing your righteousness before men.

When you forgive you take the hit.

When you forgive, you choose to look bad instead of defending yourself.

When you forgive, you give the last word to the one who offended you instead of defending yourself to make yourself look better before men.

Fasting

Finally, just as you should give alms and pray as before the face of God, so too should you fast to be seen by your Father.

The followers of Christ are not to look gloomy or disfigure their faces like the hypocrites.

Rather, Christ calls you to anoint your head and wash your face.

Don't let anyone but your heavenly Father know you are fasting.

For then your heavenly Father will reward you.

The Fatherhood of God

So to reiterate again, the way you avoid practicing your righteousness before men is by see that God is you Father.

God is the Father of his people and we are his children.

Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is to help us reorient our lives and our actions on the basis of our standing as God's children.

When you realize that you live under the approving gaze of your heavenly Father, why would you seek to find treasure from anywhere but him.

Recall what James writes:

James 1:17 ESV

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Or again what we are told in [Hebrews 11:6](#)

Hebrews 11:6 ESV

⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Live by faith before your heavenly Father and receive the great reward that comes from him.

Lay Up Treasure in Heaven

This is what it means to lay up your treasure in Heaven.

Our final verses lay out the very profound point that our hearts follow our desires.

Jesus teaches that all the treasures that this life has to offer are at risk of being destroyed by moth or rust or by being stolen by thieves.

In the context of this passage, the treasure you are tempted to lay up for yourself is the praise of men.

But the treasure of that reward cannot keep your heart safe.

If your treasure is the praise of men, then that is where your heart will be.

But if your heart is there, then your heart is in danger.

But if you place your treasure with God, your heart will be raised up to him.

And in being raised up to him, it is kept safe by him.

So lift up your hearts to the Lord by placing your treasure with him.

Seek not the praise and glory that comes from men, but rather seek the glory of God.

And you do that by turning to Christ, the radiance of the Father's glory.

He invites you to his table now, do not turn away from his heavenly reward.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!