

MATT 6:1-18

AUGUST 7-13



Sermon Overview

The next section of the sermon begins with a very clear statement of purpose: “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 6:1) Many have taken this passage to mean that Christians ought not perform any external actions in front of others (no prayer, no giving, no fasting), but that misses the point of Jesus’ teaching. Once again, Jesus is going after the heart. Notice the importance of the three little words “in order to” in that opening verse. Once again, Jesus is not teaching against right action—instead, he’s strongly opposing those who would perform “right action” for the purpose of being seen by men. The problem, Jesus says, isn’t the action but the heart! What is the motivation for our works? For our worship? We can do the right thing with entirely wrong motivations and feel quite good about ourselves—this is all too common in our culture today. So as we think through our giving, praying, and fasting, we must do so cognizant of the deeper impulses of our heart and what it reveals, or betrays, about our true desires.

Discussion Questions

1. *Read Matthew 6:1.* Before getting into the specifics of the following verses, take a moment to reflect on what “practicing your righteousness” might look like in your context? What are some examples of these actions?
2. *Read Matthew 6:2-18.* Take several minutes to compare and contrast these three accounts. What are the similarities in structure and content? What differences exist? Someone summarize the overall teaching of Jesus in this section.
3. In what ways do you find yourself working in order to “be seen by others”? What does this reveal about your heart?
4. How does the gospel speak to our desire to be seen and noticed for our works of righteousness? How does the life, death, and resurrection of Christ affect our works?
5. Looking at the three categories Jesus mentions, which one do you struggle with rightly practicing the most? In what ways can your community help you in this area?
6. Take a few minutes to focus on the Lord’s prayer. What aspect of the prayer resonates with you? What parts of the prayer challenge you and in what ways?
7. Close by spending some time praying together following Jesus’ model. Don’t feel tied to the exact words, but allow the prayer to guide your words.

Prayer Directives

- Praise God for the righteousness that he freely bestows on his children on account of the perfect work of his Son. Meditate on the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus.
- Confess the ways in which you have practiced righteousness in order to be seen by others. Be specific in identifying these areas in your own heart.
- Thank God for the persistent grace that meets you in the midst of your sin. Recognize the sufficiency of Christ and the great reward now available to you through his blood.
- Ask the Spirit to give you greater clarity and discernment regarding the many temptations of pursuing a righteousness of your own. Ask for the strength to live for the glory of the Father above all things.