

## **ASTONISHED prt 11**

### **Matthew 6:1-4**

#### **Man's recognition fades but our Father's reward is forever.**

##### **INTRO:**

- This sermon was on the schedule several months ago – I need you to know I'm not preaching about money because we need to make budget – but because we want to make disciples.
- Jesus, in the gospels, talks more about money than He does about heaven and hell combined? There are over 2300 verses in the Bible about money. For those of you who are doing math, that's like 7% of the Bible. 40% of Jesus' parables are about money. Truth be told... Jesus taught more about money than I have preached about money.
- To be sure, we are not a prosperity gospel church – where we USE God as a means to be wealthy. Neither are we a poverty gospel church – where the less you have the godlier you are. We believe that we are to be generous, like our God is generous, while simultaneously enjoying all He has richly given us.

##### **OPEN:**

- Have you ever intentionally let a helium balloon go? (It's pretty tragic if this happens on accident - just ask Ellie when she lost hers coming out of Publix). We've even been apart of school functions where you release hundreds of balloons with messages to see who gets one... You know how it goes — it floats up crazy high, pretty cool as it floats out of site... full of promise and excitement.
- But eventually it always comes back down. We just don't know where.
- I've seen it dozens of times while hunting — deflated Valentine's or birthday balloons lying lifeless and forgotten in the woods. The helium gives it a temporary lift, but it never lasts.

#### **Too often we're like balloons — inflated and lifted by the helium of human praise**

- When we pump ourselves up with man's recognition, praise, and approval, we swell up — but that recognition is always leaking out. All it takes is one criticism, one sharp word, one moment of being ignored ... and we deflate, crash, and it leaves us feeling empty again. That's what chasing the recognition of people does to us.
- It gives a quick rise, but it always fades.
- Always ends up lost and forgotten. Jesus offers us something far better.

#### **Man's recognition fades but our Father's reward is forever.**

- The next three Sundays, Christ expands the thought of Matt 5:20, showing how the Pharisees' righteousness was deficient by exposing their hypocrisy in the matters of "charitable deeds" (vv. 1–4); "prayer" (vv. 5–15); and "fasting" (vv. 16–18). All of these acts are supposed to be worship rendered to God, never displays of self-righteousness to gain the recognition of others.

### 1. Man's recognition is a fading reward

**Vs 1** *"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.*

- On the OUSIDE: They were doing right things BUT for the wrong reasons
- In this case, giving to the needy – 'Almsgiving' – giving to the poor
- This passage is about true generosity.
- They were doing the right stuff with the wrong motives – and that still doesn't please God nor usher in His reward.
- On the INSIDE: They were buying approval – and **that is not generosity.**

**Vs 2** *"Thus, **when you give** to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their **reward**.*

- Being generous is implied! WHEN you give.
- It's actually commanded in the law

**Deuteronomy 15:11 (ESV) 11** *For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'*

- "sound no trumpet before you" in other words, don't toot your own horn... don't draw attention to yourself. Generally speaking, his should always be the case no matter how we serve the Lord – make it about him, not about you.
- **hypocrites.** This word had its origins in Greek theater, describing actors who wore different masks to play various roles.
- Their reward is that they were seen by men, nothing more. God does not reward hypocrisy...
- The problem isn't the act of giving itself. The problem is **motive and audience.** The hypocrites (the "actors") gave publicly with trumpets and fanfare so everyone would

notice and praise them. Jesus says they already received their reward — cheap, temporary human approval.

- We seek man's recognition today too – “I want the recognition of others whether it comes from my performance, my politics, my ideology, my choices...” BUT what our heart really desire is *justification* - Meaning we do NOT want to be found guilty of being bad, less than, a chump, worthless, a failure or a terrible person. It is man’s way of atoning for our sin and portraying the right kind of identity.
- So, we virtue signal. We want everyone around us to inflate the balloon of our ego so we can earn justification. It never works.
- We virtue signal by...
  - Sharing that article or post so people see we care about the right causes.
  - Highlighting our acts of kindness or generosity on social media.
    - Don’t get me wrong, those things can have their place by bringing awareness to the needs of others.
    - BUT if your motive is to signal how good you are... its just a helium balloon and your reward is already over.
  - Making sure people know how busy we are serving or how much we’ve sacrificed.
  - Quietly (or not so quietly) letting others know we’re on the “right side” of cultural issues.
- It feels like it works for a moment — the balloon rises. But it always comes back down. The recognition fades, the likes slow down, the compliments stop... and **we’re left feeling empty again, needing another hit of approval just to stay afloat.**

**Man’s recognition fades but our Father’s reward is forever.**

## **2. Our Father’s rewards are for now and forever.**

*Vs 3 But **when** you **give** to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,*

- When you give – its stewardship. Time, talent, treasure, BUT let’s be clear where Jesus is clear...He IS talking about our money here.
- Giving NOTHING is unacceptable in the Kingdom – The King of the kingdom is the most generous... he gave everything for you to be free from sin and hell. It’s the way of the king and the way of kingdom people We are givers... when you give.

- *do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing*, This is hyperbolic, vivid Jewish exaggeration — Jesus’ way of saying: Give so secretly that you don’t even draw attention to yourself.
- Your right hand is the one actively giving (putting money in the box, helping someone, writing the check).
- Your left hand represents you yourself — your own ego, your desire for recognition, your tendency to congratulate yourself.
- Don’t let your left hand:
  - pat yourself on the back.
  - keep score.
  - tell anyone — not even yourself in a self-satisfied way.
- Some people give to be seen by others. Jesus says: Give so secretly that you don’t even see yourself doing it.

**VS 4** so that your **giving** may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will **reward** you.

- Our giving is for an Audience of one. Your Heavenly Father – who is generous beyond belief...owns it all and rewards you when you give with the right motive.
- What’s up with these rewards? There is a reward from God and a reward from man.
- Man’s reward –decaying
  - A few verses down: Vs 19 *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, **where moth and rust destroy***
  - Human praise is exactly that kind of “treasure.” It feels good for a moment, then it’s gone — forgotten by next week
- Love bugs: frenzy for 3-4 days, but they end up stuck to windshields – messy
- Fireworks: great for a moment, but there’s a mess to clean up the next day.

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- God’s reward
  - FUTURE:
  - VS 20... *but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys...*
  - *“To an inheritance that is **imperishable, undefiled, and unfading**, kept in heaven for you.” (1 Peter 1:4)*

- it's not just forever, its alive and growing NOW

**2 Corinthians 9:6–8 (ESV)** *6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*

- Generous giving is a partnership with our Father to meet the needs of His kingdom.
  - The joy of working with our Father is reward
  - The joy of seeing the needs of others met is reward
  - The joy of watching Johnny and soon to be Brandon baptizing new believers is reward

**1 Timothy 6:6–10 (ESV)** *6 But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

- The reward is the great gain of contentment.
- The reward is God Himself
- God is generous and we are called to be like Him.

The good news is that God is radically generous. While we were busy trying to justify ourselves — pumping up our fragile egos with man's recognition, virtue signaling for approval, and chasing rewards that always fade — the Father did the unthinkable. In the ultimate act of generosity, He gave His own beloved Son to die in our place, not because we were worthy, but because we were lost, empty, and bankrupt. On the cross, Jesus absorbed our failure, our self-righteousness, and our desperate need for human applause so that we could be fully forgiven and fully accepted. Now, because of Jesus, the Audience of One looks at us and says, 'Well done' — not because of what we have done, but because of what Christ has done for us. And the reward? It is God Himself. We get Him forever — an eternal, unfading, ever-growing satisfaction in the Father's love that nothing in this world can give and nothing can take away."

#### APPLICATION:

1. Change your view of money to God's view of money
  - It's a way to partner with Him - He owns it all and you will be rewarded
2. Live for the Audience of One
  - Serving the Kingdom is all about Him – not us.

3. If you are not giving, start small and work your way to what God has placed in your heart (you will be tested)
  - Randy Alcorn says it this way, “God raises our standard of living so that we may raise our standard of giving”
  - What if, instead of asking, “how much do I give?” we asked, “How much do I keep?”
  - **Whatever is keeping you from giving is keeping you from reward.**
4. Make a budget
  - Include regular giving IN YOUR BUDGET
  - 83% of millennials have a budget
  - 74% of Gen Xers have a budget.
  - But here's the kicker, only 34% of them track it.
5. Track your spending –
  - what gets measured gets improved.
  - Apps every dollar or rocket money or monarch, quicken
  - Zyns are 312 a year and lattes are
  - Women spend an average of about \$2,300–\$2,327 per year on coffee.
  - If you were God, would you give you more money?

### **Man's recognition fades, but our Father's reward is forever**

#### QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

1. Where in your life right now are you most tempted to do the right thing (serving, giving, posting, helping) for the applause or approval of people rather than for the Audience of One? What does that “helium of human praise” look like for you personally?

2. Jesus says the Father “who sees in secret will reward you.” What would it look like for you this week to take one practical step toward secret, joyful generosity (with your time, money, or kindness) that no one else would see or praise? How might that help you experience more of the Father's lasting reward instead of chasing the temporary buzz of man's recognition?