

Godly Giving

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[0 : 00] Jesus. Tonight's passage starts a new section.

! For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

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.

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Think about what we've seen so far in the Sermon on the Mount. The first section contained the Beatitudes. They were a description of the Christian as he is.

[1 : 12] Then in the next section, we see how the Christian reacts to the world and how the world reacts to him. The third section deals with the relationship of the Christian to the law of God.

We spent several weeks there and we saw the positive exposition of the law and how Jesus contrasted that with the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees. Now Christ takes up a different aspect of truth, but it's one which is related to the previous section.

In the previous section, he'd warned his hearers against the erroneous doctrines of the Jewish teachers. Here he cautions against the Jewish teachers' evil practices, particularly the sins of hypocrisy and worldliness.

This section from Matthew 6, verse 1 all the way through verse 18 emphasizes outward formal righteousness. And in the section, Jesus gives three illustrations of religious activity.

The first has to do with our giving, which you can look at as our religion as it relates to others. The second that will start next week has to do with praying, so that's our religion as it acts toward God.

[2 : 22] And then the third has to do with fasting, our religion as it acts in relation to ourselves. This is not the only place in the Bible where Jesus calls out improper motivation for giving, praying, and fasting.

In Luke chapter 18, verses 9 through 14, Jesus spoke about the same things. So listen to Luke chapter 18, verses 9 through 14.

Luke wrote there, He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt. Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

[3 : 29] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

So did you hear the references to giving, praying, and fasting in those verses? Luke 18, 12 had the reference to both fasting and giving, and that verse is where the Pharisee said, I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. The entire passage is about the Pharisee's prayer, and it's a reference to improperly motivated prayer. Sam Storms wrote, There is no more astonishing proof of human perversity than our skill at transforming spiritual holiness into self-righteous hypocrisy.

We possess an uncanny knack for using submission to the will of God as an opportunity for showmanship in the eyes of man. Jesus knew this. He was not naive about the sinful propensity in our hearts.

He knew how easy and natural it is for you and me to turn high Christian morality into cheap legalistic rules. He knew how prone you and I are to substitute love for godliness and holiness with

a love for a reputation for godliness and holiness.

[4 : 43] So that's the important thing. We need to be careful to avoid substituting a love for godliness and holiness with a love for a reputation for those two things.

The practices of giving, praying, and fasting are all places where we can easily fall into the trap of having self-righteous motives. We see that in the Luke passage we just read, and we'll see that in Matthew 6, verses 1-18.

So here's the bottom line of the first 18 verses of Matthew 6. The difference between hypocrisy and holiness is our motivation. That's also the main idea for tonight.

The difference between hypocrisy and holiness is our motivation. The words hypocrite and hypocrisy will show up often as we study these next 18 verses of Jesus' sermon.

A hypocrite originally was a Greek actor who wore a mask that portrayed, in an exaggerated way, the role that was being dramatized. So for obvious reasons, the term came to be used of anyone who pretended to be what he was not.

[5 : 52] Hypocrites are found in paganism, in Judaism, and in Christianity. There were hypocrites in the early church, the medieval church, and the Reformation church.

There still are hypocrites in the church today, and Paul assures us that there will be hypocrites all the way to the end of the age. In 1 Timothy 4, verses 1-2, Paul wrote, Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.

The problem with hypocrisy among Christians is that hypocrisy can deter others from wanting to associate with believers. If Christians appear to be no different than the world, what incentive do unbelievers have to get to know the God that we profess?

As we go through Matthew 6, verses 1-18 over the next few weeks, Jesus will illustrate the difference between hypocrisy and holiness.

In other words, he'll show us the difference between self-righteousness and true righteousness.

We'll cover tonight's four verses in three sections. In Matthew 6-1, we see the heavenly principle.

[7 : 13] The heavenly principle is the first section. Let's read verse 1 again. Jesus said, 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.

You can tell here that Jesus is continuing his teaching on righteousness, and the Greek word used for righteousness is the same word that was used in verses 5-6 and 5-20.

Although the word is the same, the emphasis has shifted. Previously, righteousness related to kindness, purity, honesty, and love.

Now it concerns practices such as giving, praying, and fasting. So we see a progression in Jesus' sermon here. In Matthew 5-6, Jesus told us to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

In Matthew 5-20, he told us that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Here in chapter 6, Jesus will give us three examples of how to demonstrate our righteousness.

[8 : 27] Before he gets to those examples, Jesus gives us the general principle that we have here. Nearly all of us know someone who wants to make sure people know when he does something good.

And that's the type of person that Jesus is criticizing here. Look at the first clause of verse 1. It says, Beware of practicing your righteousness before men in order to be seen by them.

We have to avoid taking that clause in too small a chunk. Some people take it out of context by quoting only the part about practicing your righteousness before men.

Those people say that we should never practice righteousness before others. But look at what Jesus really said. The thing that Jesus criticizes is the motivation for practicing righteousness.

And that is practicing righteousness before men so that we'll be seen by them. If we miss that point, we'll be off track. The issue that Jesus is criticizing here is practicing our righteousness again so that we will be seen by men, not just practicing our righteousness in general.

[9 : 36] So do you see the difference between practicing righteousness and practicing righteousness so that we'll be seen by others? Two people can do identical actions that are noticed by others.

One person can be holy and the other can be a hypocrite. And that's why tonight's main idea is that the difference between hypocrisy and holiness is our motivation.

John MacArthur wrote, The question is not whether our good works should be seen by others, but whether they are done for that reason. When our good works are done so that attention and glory are focused on our Father who is in heaven rather than ourselves, God is pleased. But if they are done to be noticed by men, they are done self-righteously and hypocritically, and they are rejected by God. The difference is in purpose and motivation. When what we do is done in the right spirit and for the right purpose, it will almost inevitably be done in the right way. At first glance, Jesus' words in Matthew 6.1 appear to contradict what he said earlier in the sermon.

[10:47] Listen to Matthew 5.16. In Matthew 5.16, Jesus said, The difference between Matthew 5.16 and Matthew 6.1 is easier to reconcile than it first sounds.

The teachings of those two verses relate to different sins. In the first passage, Jesus is dealing with cowardice. He's talking to people who are afraid to let their light shine before others. In other words, they would like to hide that they are Christians. In the second, he's dealing with hypocrisy. People who want to have their light seen by others. A.B. Bruce gave this helpful explanation.

He said, We are to show when tempted to hide, and hide when tempted to show. John Stott wrote, Our good works must be public so that our light shines.

Our religious devotions must be secret, lest we boast about them. The result of both instructions is the same, namely the glory of God. Why are we to keep our piety secret?

[12:08] It is so that glory may be given to God rather than men. Why are we to let our light shine and do good works in the open? It is so that men may glorify our Heavenly Father.

In the last clause of verse 1, Jesus gives the result of practicing our righteousness so that it will be seen by others.

When we do that, Jesus says, Then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. False righteousness does have a reward.

And that is the recognition and applause of other hypocrites and of ignorant people. That is the limit of the honor, though. Jesus tells us that those who practice such hypocritical righteousness have no reward with their Father who is in heaven.

God doesn't reward men-pleasers. The reason He doesn't is they rob Him of His glory. We also need to avoid getting sidetracked by Jesus' use of the term Father in these verses.

[13:12] Father is used in the same sense as it was in verse 16 of chapter 5. It's an Old Testament usage of it in which God was Israel's Father.

He's not using it in the New Testament sense of personal relationship by salvation. Matthew 6.1 is a harsh rebuke from Jesus, but it's one that we must take seriously.

The sin which Christ rebuked is far more serious than is commonly supposed and far more prevalent with many of the Lord's own people. It consists of making men, rather than God, the judges and approvers of our actions.

Christians more easily can fall into the trap of wanting our righteousness to be seen by men than we can fall into the trap of some other sins. No other human knows our motivations for practicing righteousness in public, but God does.

And that's why we should repeatedly ask ourselves about our motives. That's why we should ask God to reveal any improper motives that we have. This is a good time to remind ourselves of 1 Samuel 16.7.

[14:24] And here is that verse again. 1 Samuel 16.7 says, But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him.

For the Lord does not see as mortals see. They look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. We also should be aware that the choice Jesus presents is not really between pleasing men and pleasing God.

It's a choice between pleasing God and pleasing ourselves. Our ultimate reason for trying to please others by our so-called righteous deeds is not out of sincere concern for them.

We want to please them because we believe that, if we do, they will think more highly of us. So we've talked about the heavenly principle.

Matthew 6.2-4 has the first of three examples that Jesus uses to illustrate hypocrisy and holiness. And that example considers our giving to the poor.

[15:28] And in Matthew 6.2, we see the hypocritical procedure. The hypocritical procedure is your second blank. In verse 2, Jesus says, 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. The first thing to note there is that Jesus says, When you give to the needy. Jesus assumes that his followers will give to the needy.

Giving to the needy is an Old Testament principle that still applies today. Speaking of the poor, Deuteronomy 15, verses 10 and 11 say, You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him.

Because for this the Lord God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. 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.

Proverbs 19.17 says, Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed. Proverbs 29.7 says, A righteous man knows the rights of the poor.

[16:57] A wicked man does not understand such knowledge. And finally, Psalm 41.1 says, Blessed is the one who considers the poor. In the day of trouble, the Lord delivers him.

Clearly the Bible teaches that we should give to the poor. The problem was that the religious leaders had misapplied this teaching by making giving a means to salvation.

The book of Tobit is one of the Jewish apocryphal books that was incorrectly used by the Jews in Jesus' day. And that same book is incorrectly used by the Catholics in other religions today.

The Pharisees particularly liked to focus on Tobit 12.9. And Fogit 12.9 said, For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin.

Those who give alms will enjoy a full life. We recognize this teaching as heretical. We know that giving cannot cleanse a man from sin, but such was the Jewish concept of giving.

[18:02] And that's why Jesus is trying to differentiate here. Deuteronomy 15 made it very clear that when people gave out of a heart of love and in obedience to the Word of God, God would bring blessing.

But the Lord said our way to lose your blessing was to give for personal benefit. When someone gives to be respected and admired by men, and when someone gives to impress men with his generosity, all basis for blessings from God is lost.

Once again, we see that a person's motivation is key. Look again at Matthew 6.2. He says, 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. The Pharisees liked to pose as being the most devout worshipers of God and lovers of their fellow men, when they actually were self-righteous and sought only the applause of their fellow men.

Behind the outward appearance of piety and generosity, they were the slaves of worldly and selfish passions. They performed their deeds of charity where the largest number of onlookers congregated together, and their reward was the admiration of shallow-minded people.

[19:26] We'll find as we go through these verses that Jesus uses humor to make serious points. No evidence exists that the Pharisees actually blew a trumpet before they gave money, but their actions had the effect of doing that.

The Pharisees wanted so badly to be noticed that they did what they could to be noticed. They spent so much time trying to be noticed that they might as well have sounded a trumpet before they turned loose of their offering.

We rightly can laugh at that picture, but we see similar things from people who want to get noticed today. We even have a similar expression. Think about what it means when we say that somebody is blowing his own horn.

That's the same concept we have here in Matthew 6. Jesus explains why people blow their own horn. He says they want to be praised by others. Human nature has stayed the same since Jesus first preached the Sermon on the Mount.

Multiple charities, some of them good charities, play to the human desire to be noticed and praised. Many charities publish an honor roll of donors, and some even tier that honor roll so that people can get an idea of how much somebody gave.

[20:42] Search for the term platinum donor on the internet, and you'll find several organizations that will call you a platinum donor if you give at least a certain amount of money. One non-profit

organization I saw divided its donors into bronze, silver, gold, platinum, and iridium categories.

In case like me you're wondering what iridium is, it's part of the platinum group of metals, but one source called it very dense and very rare.

Another called it the most corrosion-resistant material known to man. So perhaps iridium really is the perfect example to show the difference between how human nature views things and how God views things.

That non-profit organization uses iridium to imply that the benefits of a donation will be around forever and that the donor might be remembered forever, but what really matters is how God views that donation, and God has a much different view of a donation done for recognition.

Listen to this quote from J. Dwight Pentecost. If we give for publicity, we have received our reward. We want publicity, and we get it.

[22 : 00] But God does not count it an evidence of righteousness nor a manifestation of love. The only love associated with blowing the trumpet is love for oneself.

When men give as the Pharisees gave to have glory of men, they are treating men as their justifiers. When they give to be admired of men, they operate on the basic assumption that their sin is against man.

So if they give to man, they can erase their sin against man. They therefore put themselves under the judgment of men and by their gifts seek to be excused by man from their sin.

They fail to realize that sin, while it involves other men, is sin against the holy character of God. It is not men who need to be placated, but a holy, righteous God.

Jesus closes verse 2 by restating in a different way what he said at the end of verse 1. At the end of verse 2, Jesus says that when people give to be noticed by others, they have received their reward.

[23 : 04] That's another way of saying what he said at the end of verse 1. At the end of verse 1, he says, then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Jesus wants to make sure we get the point that we're not going to get any reward from God if we give for the wrong reasons.

Here's something else to consider where it starts getting a little more personal than it already is, perhaps. Even if we do nothing outwardly to call attention to our giving, we still could be guilty of the same type of behavior that Jesus criticizes in these verses.

Here's a quote from John MacArthur. He said, Even if we only want people to notice and do nothing to attract their attention, our heart motive is to be honored by men.

The real trumpet blowing, the basic hypocrisy, is always on the inside, and that is where God judges. Hypocritical righteousness, just as true righteousness, begins in the heart.

That puts an even tougher perspective on it, doesn't it, when you think that even if we don't do anything to be noticed, if we still want to be noticed, we are guilty of this sin.

[24 : 16] Jesus doesn't stop with telling us about unacceptable giving, though. He next will tell us about godly giving. Godly giving can be just as difficult. So Matthew 6.1 showed us the heavenly principle.

Matthew 6.2 showed us the hypocritical procedure. And in the third section of this passage, we see the holy practice. The holy practice is what we find in verses 3 and 4.

So let's read verses 3 and 4 again. Jesus said, Notice the start of verse 3.

Just like he did in verse 2, Jesus says, This drives home the point that believers are to give to the needy. But we need to remember that that giving is acceptable to God only if we practice godly giving.

Jesus says at the end of verse 3, Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. That likely is a proverbial expression that simply referred to doing something spontaneously with no special effort or show.

[25 : 39] Giving to help those in need should be a normal activity of the Christian, and he should do it as simply, directly, and discreetly as possible. The most satisfying giving, and the giving that God blesses, is that which is done and then forgotten.

It's done in love out of response to a need, and when the need is met, the giver goes on about his business, not wanting or waiting for recognition. So let's move on to verse 4 now.

It says that we should avoid letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing, so that our giving may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

John Stott said, Of course it is not possible to obey this command of Jesus in precise literalness. If we keep accounts and plan our giving, as conscientious Christians should, we are bound to know

how much we give away.

We cannot very well close our eyes while writing out our checks. Nevertheless, as soon as the giving of a gift is decided and done, it will be in keeping with this teaching of Jesus that we forget it. [26 : 49] We are not to keep recalling it, to gloat over it, or to preen ourselves on how generous, disciplined, or conscientious our giving may have been. Christian giving is to be marked by self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, not by self-congratulation.

Some people can be guilty of taking Jesus' teaching about secrecy to the incorrect, opposite extreme. They can use it to justify a lack of giving by convincing themselves that they are just trying to avoid being like the hypocrites.

Here's how A.W. Pink described verse 4. He said, secrecy itself may become a cover for greed. Under the pretense of hiding good works, we may hoard up our money to spend upon ourselves. There are times when a person of prominence may rightly excite his backward brethren by his own example of generosity. We must not understand Christ as here forbidding all charitable actions which may be seen by others, but rather understand him to mean that we should perform them as unobtrusively as possible, making it our chief concern to aim at the approval of God.

Listen to that last part again. We must not understand Christ as forbidding all charitable actions which may be seen by others, but rather understand him to mean that we should perform them as unobtrusively as possible, making it our chief concern to aim at the approval of God.

[28 : 21] Remember the main idea. The difference between hypocrisy and holiness is our motivation. Other people may not be able to discern our motivation, but we always need to remember that God can and God does.

Jesus is concerned throughout this sermon with motivation itself, with the hidden thoughts of the heart. In his exposition of the sixth and seventh commandments, Jesus indicated that both murder and adultery can be committed in our heart.

He said that unwarranted anger was this kind of heart murder, and lustful looks were a kind of heart adultery. In the matter of giving, he has the same concern about secret thoughts.

The question is not so much what the hand is doing, but what the heart is thinking while the hand is doing it. There are three possibilities. We are seeking the praise of men, or we preserve our anonymity but are quietly congratulating ourselves, or third, we desire the approval of our divine Father alone.

So think about those three possibilities. We are seeking the praise of men, We preserve our anonymity but quietly congratulate ourselves, or we desire the approval of God alone.

[29 : 40] Here's a long but good quote from Martin Lloyd-Jones. He said, The Christian is to live in such a way that men looking at him and seeing the quality of his life will glorify God.

He must always remember at the same time that he is not to do things in order that he may attract attention to himself. He must not desire to be seen of men. He is never to be self-conscious. But clearly this balance is a fine and delicate one. So often we tend to go to one extreme or the other. Christian people tend either to be guilty of great ostentation or else to become monks and hermits.

As you look at the long story of the Christian church throughout the centuries, you will find this great conflict has been going on. They have either been ostentatious or else they have been so afraid of self and self-glorification that they have segregated themselves from the world.

But here we're called to avoid both extremes. It is a delicate life. It is a sensitive life. But if we approach it the right way and under the leading of the Holy Spirit, the balance can be maintained.

[30 : 51] He continued, Of course, if we just take these things as rules which we have to put into operation, we shall go wrong on one side or the other. But if we realize that what matters is the great principle, then we will be saved from error on the right hand and on the left.

Look at the last sentence of verse 4 now. Jesus tells us what will happen when we give with proper motives. He says, And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Given all the time we've spent talking about doing things with proper motivation, some people can get uncomfortable with the idea of earning rewards. Jesus makes it clear in verse 4 that God will reward us when we give with proper motivation.

Even in the verses on improper giving, Jesus implied that people should expect a reward. Listen to these words from John MacArthur. He said, Tonight's passage is far from the first time that we've heard Jesus talk about rewards in the Sermon on the Mount.

If you'll remember, each beatitude included a reward. I'm sure you probably remember this, but back on August 31st in our fifth part of the study on the beatitudes, we looked in detail about the biblical concept of rewards.

[32 : 40] And here's a quote from James Montgomery Boyce that we discussed then. It's the only quote from that lesson that we'll use tonight. Christians who get uncomfortable thinking about rewards often are thinking only of material or self-exalting things.

Actually, the rewards are far more likely to be spiritual, fellowship with Christ and proximity to Him, and they cannot be the least bit self-exalting. Even the rewards flow from God's grace.

Here's another quote from John MacArthur. He said, The greatest reward a believer can have is the knowledge that he has pleased his Lord.

Our motive for looking forward to His rewards should be the anticipation of casting them as an offering at His feet. So listen to that last sentence one more time.

Our motive for looking forward to God's rewards and Jesus' rewards should be the anticipation of casting them at Jesus' feet. So there's that word motive again.

[33 : 44] Our motive for looking forward to those rewards is what we can do when we give them back to Jesus as an offering. Here's how A.W. Pink summarized Jesus' teaching about giving.

He said, To give to advance worldly interest is a manifestation of covetousness. If to seek applause, it is to gratify pride.

If to alleviate the sufferings of my fellows, it is only the exercise of common humanity. But if I minister unto the needy out of a respect to the divine authority and with the desire of pleasing God, acting from regard for His will, to which I long to be conformed in all things, then it is a spiritual act and acceptable to the Lord.

Are you feeling a bit convicted about how this chapter starts? I am too, but I'm also hesitant to say that out loud because you might think I'm trying to practice my righteousness before men.

The good news for all of us, though, is that if we're feeling convicted, that's exactly how Jesus wanted us to feel. And here's a preview.

[34 : 56] We'll get more and more convicted as we work our way through chapter 6. Here's what Martin Lloyd-Jones said about the chapter. He said, That's an exciting line there, isn't it?

He goes on to say, It probes and examines and holds a mirror up before us, and it will not allow us to escape. There is no chapter which is more calculated to promote self-humbling and humiliation than this particular one.

But thank God for it. The Christian should always be anxious to know himself. No other man truly wants to know himself. The natural man thinks he knows himself and thereby reveals his basic trouble.

He evades self-examination because to know oneself is ultimately the most painful piece of knowledge that a man can ever acquire. And here is a chapter that brings us face to face with ourselves and enables us to see ourselves exactly as we are.

But I repeat, thank God for it because it is only the man who has truly seen himself for what he is who is likely to fly to Christ and to seek to be filled with the Spirit of God.

[36 : 22] Who alone can burn out of him the vestiges of self and everything that tends to mar his Christian life and living. Hang on to that last part of the quote when we get challenged by Jesus' words in Matthew 6.

Thank God for the chapter because it is only the man who has truly seen himself for what he is who is likely to fly to Christ and to seek to be filled with the Spirit of God who alone can burn out of him the vestiges of self and everything that tends to mar his Christian life and living.

All of us have been guilty at one time or another probably many more times than we want to admit and maybe even more than we know of committing the sin of wanting our righteousness to be seen by men.

The gospel, though, really is good news and it literally means good news. What makes it good news is that God has provided a way for us to be forgiven of that sin and any other sin.

So God has provided a way for us to be forgiven of that sin and any other sin and that same way allows us to be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5.21 reminds us for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[37 : 43] That's why we must preach the gospel to ourselves every day. On one hand, the gospel keeps us from thinking that we can do something to earn our salvation. On the other hand, the

gospel keeps us from becoming so despondent over our sinful condition that we lose all hope of salvation.

So remember 2 Corinthians 5.21. Speaking of God, it says, Let's pray.

Father, these are challenging words to start chapter 6 and the examples will get more challenging as we go along. Help us perform honest assessments of our motives as we look at these verses and really examine why we do what we do and bring us more and more to the realization that everything we do should be for the glory of yourself.

Be with us and enable us to glorify you more and more as we go along. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.