

Series Series: DIFFERENT/ Sermon on the Mount

Sermon title: Giving In Secret

Scripture reading: Matthew 6:1-4

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

September 5, 2021

S.C. Brown, Pastor

We are continuing our study in the Sermon on the Mount. We did Chapter 5 of Matthew's gospel last fall and we will do Chapters 6 and 7 this fall.

This sermon series in Jesus's most famous message we are calling **DIFFERENT**. Why is that?

Because as we will see today, Jesus's followers are to be different in this world.

They are to give to the needy differently.

They are to pray differently.

They are to fast differently.

Because our God is different. He is real. He's actually the only one there is. There are no others.

Let's pray.

In March of 2016, right before we flew out from the USA to come back to Hong Kong to serve here at Clearwater Bay Church, we went down to Alabama to visit with my sister.

She took us to this old soda fountain restaurant in Scottsboro, Alabama; a kind of quintessential old drug store ice cream parlor.

Payne's has been there since 1869. Great food, great ice cream, 1950's decor and just fun.

We ate hot dogs, sandwiches and had huge amounts of ice cream and racked up a pretty large bill since we wouldn't see my sister's family for a while.

We went to pay for the meal and the cashier said that a gentlemen had paid for it all....anonymously.

We asked who it was and the lady said something like, "I don't know. He left."

Has that ever happened to you?

Why would a person do that?

And why do it and not tell anyone?

Let's read our passage for today.

Matthew 6:1-4

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.

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.

3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. **4** so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

First, we want to see the main point Jesus is making in this section. That is in verse 1.

I. The General Principle

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.

The human heart is wicked and deceitful.

In the midst of doing good things, the motive in the heart can be wrong.

We live in a world that is obsessed with self.

Social media is a chasm of glorifying self, flexing as we show the world our lives.

That's why Jesus gives this warning to Christians.

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.

This warning can encompass many many things we do. But, Jesus gives 3 examples of religious practices that all religions value...giving to the needy, prayer and fasting.

Today we will look at Giving to the Needy.

II. A Specific Example

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.

3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. **4** so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

First, Jesus tells us what NOT to do in our giving. We are NOT to seek the praise of others in the slightest way. Jesus says if we do this we are *hypocrites*... actors..we are just pretending to be righteous.

The Pharisees might have actually sounded trumpets before they gave to show off but it's likely that Jesus is simply saying, "Don't draw any attention to yourselves."

Now, if you know yourself well...you know that this is subtle and possible for us all to do. We may not even be aware that we do it. Jesus is saying...Beware...Be aware that you can do this.

Jesus says that if we give to be seen by others the only reward we have is the praise of others.

Second, Jesus tells us what we ARE to do.

3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. **4** so that your giving may be in secret.

Most people in the world are right handed. The right hand would be the usual hand that someone would use to give someone money.

Jesus says, the left hand shouldn't even know it.

I don't think we can read too much into this phrase. I think it means simply what Jesus says next, 'your giving should be in secret.'

Not even the other side of your body should know about it, nor your friends on Facebook or anyone.

Only the person you give to may know and you know and God knows. No one else.

Jesus says that when our giving comes from such a pure heart that we will be rewarded by God for this kind of giving.

Why is this kind of secret giving better?

Why does God care so much?

I mean, in both cases the poor are helped, right?

This is not so much about the recipient of the gift but the giver of the gift.

Pure love, compassion and mercy are expressed when we give in secret and without glorifying self.

Pure love, compassion and mercy are tainted and stained when we steal the glory for ourselves.

In many ways, we are seeking worship.

Only God deserves worship.

We are subtly saying... 'I am wonderful'..and only God is wonderful.

We are subtly (maybe openly) saying, 'I am righteous' and no one is righteous but God alone.

Jesus says that if we pump up ourselves then we won't get rewarded by the Father because we are trying to steal glory.

That is why we are to give in secret, because only secret giving ensures we aren't seeking the praise and worship of others.

Application

What can we take away from this passage by way of application ?

1. The first question we want to ask ourselves is...Do we give to the needy? 2X in this passage Jesus says, 'WHEN you give! Jesus assumes that we will give to the needy. Do you give to the needy? How might you give to the needy regularly and who?
2. When we DO give....be careful Jesus says. In order to make sure your heart is right, do it in secret. Now, we want to avoid extremes of religiosity. It doesn't mean that you have to get all bent out of shape if someone finds out you gave. In some ways, others may find out....the issue is your heart. Do you want people to find out or not?

3. Remember that verse 1 is a general warning to doing our righteousness before others. So, it isn't just about giving. It could be our teaching, our kind words, our worship leading or singing or telling people, 'I'll pray for you'. There could be a myriad of ways that we need to ask ourselves if we are seeking to please others with the good things we do.

4. There is a phrase in this teaching by Jesus that we need to look at. ["Your Father who sees in secret"](#). In this little phrase there is great theology and significance. In this we can find comfort knowing that God sees everything we do and knows all. He knows what you are going through. He knows where you are in life. He knows how you feel. He knows when you do any good works and they aren't forgotten.

There is also a caution here in ["Your Father who sees in secret."](#) Nothing you or I do is hidden from the Lord. He sees everything we do, he knows every thought we think and he knows every motive of the heart. **Hebrews 4:13** says, ["13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."](#)

Well, in closing....what should non-Christians learn and see from this passage?

The world's religions all promote a works righteousness. God will be impressed and reward you if you give to the needy, if you pray, if you fast, if you go to Mecca on a pilgrimage, if you put fruit out for your ancestors etc.

None of those things will do any good whatsoever. You know why?

Because all of those gods are not real. They don't exist. It's a complete waste of time.

There is only one God and we can't earn his favor by doing good things.

We need a better righteousness. We need someone who is sinless and perfect to go before God on our behalf. We need a mediator to stand before God for us.

Jesus Christ lived a sinless and perfect life before God. But he died on the cross as an innocent man in the place of those who would believe in him.

If anyone believes in him, God will change him, forgive him of his sin and give him new life...eternal life.

God can do this because Jesus rose from the dead and is alive and is able to give us new life and change us.

In Christ, we can call the Creator of the Universe, "Father".

Then and only then, can we do anything to please God...like giving to the needy and do it with the right heart.