

Matthew 6:1-4

Review

- ✓ We talked several weeks ago about the fact that there is a very legitimate and important place for _____ in Christianity.
- ✓ Now Jesus will show us how we can keep our religion _____.

I. Verse 1 – Beware

- A. This word first of all reveals how very _____ we are to doing the very thing Jesus warns against.
- B. Secondly, this word calls us to be _____ at crucifying our natural instincts.
- C. Finally, this word reveals that the _____ of not heeding the warning are very severe and to be avoided at all costs.

II. “Thus, when you give to the needy”

- A. The reason for almsgiving is rooted in the _____ of God
 1. Psalm 12:5 – “Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the LORD; “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.”
 2. Psalm 68:5-6 – Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.
 3. Proverbs 14:31 – Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.
 4. Proverbs 19:17 – Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.
- B. Old Testament Background
 1. Leviticus 19:9-10 (23:22; Ex. 23:10-11; Deut. 24:19-22) – When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard

bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

2. Deuteronomy 14:28-29

3. Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 10-11 – If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be... You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your 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.”

C. Intertestamental Background

1. In fact, the Greek word for almsgiving really just means “deeds of _____” (NKJV – “When you do a charitable deed”; cf. Matthew 5:7).
2. After the exile, there was a lot more poverty among the Jews and so being generous to the poor began to look more “formal” as a religious duty and an act of piety.
3. Now the Greek word for almsgiving came to refer specifically to the *religious duty of giving money to the poor* (NRSV – “So whenever you give alms”)
4. Almsgiving came to be one of the absolute *essentials* of true _____.
 - a. “No disciple should live in a city where there is no “alms-box” (Sanhedrin)
 - b. Acts 10:1-4 (cf. Mark 12:41) – There was a man named Cornelius... a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. [An angel of God] said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.”
5. Eventually, almsgiving came to be thought of as a meritorious act that could _____ someone a righteous standing before God.

II. “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.”

- A. When any religious duty is thought to be a *meritorious* act that can *earn* us God’s favor, the result is *always* _____ and _____-righteousness!

B. Sounding the trumpet

C. “As the hypocrites do” (Contrast Matthew 5:8)

1. The Greek word for hypocrite is used to refer to _____ in a play.
2. There’s the *apparent* piety, but the piety is really just a _____ for the *actual* presence of self-serving pride.
3. All too often the hypocrite has deceived even _____.

D. "That they may be praised by others"

1. The desire for men's praise _____ the value of every good work and religious duty.
2. In God's eyes, motive is _____!

E. "Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."

1. The Greek here means "_____ in _____."
2. In the end, we can't have men's praise _____ God's praise.
3. As soon as we accept men's praise, then whatever our act of "piety", it was utterly _____ to God.

III. Verses 3-4

A. "But when you give to the needy" (when you give alms)

1. Our Lord expected that in spite of the abuses, His followers would continue to engage in the religious practice of almsgiving.
2. What will this look like today?
 - a. The main principle is that we _____ use a portion of the money that God gives us to meet the needs of others.
 - b. Acts 20:35 – In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
 - c. Romans 12:13 – Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.
 - d. Ephesians 4:28 – Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

B. "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret."

1. We are to "show when tempted to *hide*" (cf. Matthew 5:16) and "hide when tempted to *show*." (Bruce)
2. This means that even when we give money in front of others, we are nevertheless completely _____ of those other people.
 - a. Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-11).
 - b. The widow and her two coins (Mark 12:41-44).
3. "Not only are we not to tell other people about our Christian giving; there is a sense in which we are not even to tell _____." (Stott)

C. "And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

1. When we do things in secret in order that we might be noticed (rewarded) by our Father who is in heaven, prideful ambition will always give way to true _____.

2. Even our *secret* alms do not _____ God's attention. But God in His infinite _____ has chosen to pay attention anyway and to respond with His blessing and favor.
 - a. Romans 2:29 – A Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.
 - b. John 5:44 – How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?
3. _____ don't notice our acts of piety, but we rejoice to know that _____ notices!
4. Let's make sure that we give God _____ of things to see.

Teaching our Children

- ✓ Talk with your children about God's special care for the poor and the oppressed (See Scriptures under II. A. and B.).
 - ✓ Discuss the principle that we should faithfully (religious duty) use a portion of the money that God gives us to meet the needs of others (See Scriptures under III. A. 2.).
 - ✓ Discuss ways that we can fulfill this religious duty.
- Q. When the hypocrites gave money to the poor, *what* did they do and *why*?
- A. Jesus said they would blow a trumpet so that everyone would look and see how generous and kind and spiritual they were being.
(Discuss ways that we "blow our own horns" just like the Pharisees)
- Q. What sinful attitude did the Pharisees have when they did "spiritual" things in order to be praised by men?
- A. Pride
- Q. Jesus said that as soon as we *accept* any praise from men (glory in men's praise), we will not receive any praise from *????*.
- A. God. (We *cannot* have both; see Scriptures under III. C. 2.)
- Q. When we do "good" things in order to be praised by men, then in God's sight, even our good works are what?
- A. Worthless
- Q. How did Jesus tell us to give to the poor?
- A. Jesus told us not to let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. This means that our giving should be in secret and if someone does happen to see us give, we should not think about them at all. Even we ourselves shouldn't think about what we gave!
- Q. Why does Jesus say that we should *want* to do things in secret?
- A. Because God sees the things that are done in secret and He will pour His blessings (the joy of His favor) upon us (reward us)!
- Q. When we do good things (give to the poor) in secret, do we *deserve* to have God notice us and reward us with His favor?
- A. NO! When God notices us, that *is* a great reward! (Marvel with your children at the free kindness and grace of God!)
- Q. Even *we* shouldn't notice our own good deeds, but we should rejoice to know what?
- A. We should rejoice to know that *God* notices. (Spend some time thinking about how this works – not noticing ourselves, while at the same time rejoicing to know that God notices.)
- ~ Let's do lots of good deeds in secret so that we can give our good God lots of things to notice!