

Matthew 6:1-4 (NKJV)

1 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Last week we talked about how verse 1 is really the introduction to the whole chapter. The source document for the ESV translation uses a different Greek word for charitable deeds that really means **any act of righteousness, an act that we do that we claim is done only for God.**

So we covered verse one and gave an overview of the chapter.

Remember that the chapter could be titled **living in relationship to Christ.**

Now just like last text, Jesus breaks down his talk into examples. He is so intensely practical. The **Son of God, God in the flesh, God incarnate** talks to us about day to day life, day to day decisions. He talks to us **where we live.** Isn't that absolutely wonderful?

Verses 2-4 The first example is about **giving**- that is our religious act toward **others**

Verse 5-15 is about **praying**- our religious act toward God

Verses 16-18 is about **fasting**, our religious act in relation to **ourselves**

Let's dig into verse 2

2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

OK. What is the problem here that Jesus nails on the head? What is it that is **so wrong**? What is the attitude that is **singled out** and **defined** and **condemned**?

Notice that it is not that one **does** charitable deeds. The deed itself is not the problem. The lesson is certainly not, "Never do charitable deeds." In fact look at it closely. It says therefore when **you do** a charitable deed. What does that tell us? Charitable deeds are **assumed**. They are part of a believer's life.

There are no believers that **do not do** charitable deeds. Or to put it positively **all believers do charitable acts**. If we are to be **perfect** as our Father is **perfect**, as we go about learning to **reflect God's character traits**, how could we **not do** loving things to meet the needs of those around us? It would be impossible to be a truly regenerate person and not be loving, not be charitable. After all Eph 2 tells us that we were saved **in order to do works of charity** and those works were **prepared for us** before time began. Christians simply **do charitable deeds** because they love God and want to **please** their Father by **being like** their Father. Also they know that this is a way to store up treasures in heaven. They have many good reasons to do charitable deeds.

So what is the problem? These people are **intending to do** charitable deeds. Charitable deeds are **good**. What could be wrong? The Pharisees do great acts of charity. What could be wrong?

The sneaky heart. That is the problem that Jesus warns about. And what is this deadly **attitude** that will **rob us of all reward** for any charitable action? **Hypocrisy**.

As always we need to define our terms. It is very helpful for us to have definitions for all the major terms in scripture. It helps us think precisely. We become more accurate about what scripture **really means** when we know that the major **terms** mean.

Hypocrisy is basically play acting. It is pretending to be something that we are not. In Jesus day a hypocrite was a play actor who wore a mask that portrayed the facial expressions that defined the character one was playing. But behind that mask could be **any true** facial expression that was nothing like the mask portrayed. The mask could display joy. The actor could be sad, or angry, or bored. The difference was hidden by the façade.

Can you see why I stressed what I did last week? The **heart** is the issue. **Congruence** is the issue. Having what **I do** be represented by **what I am** and **what I am** by **what I do**.

So hypocrisy essentially pretends to be something that we are not. This can be done intentionally or ignorantly. A person who is clueless about who they are inside may have no idea they are pretending. The less self examined we are, the **more likely** we are to **believe** and **defend** our own hypocrisy.

But we need to make no mistake. The heart is the issue. The same exact external act can be **rewarded for eternity**, or it can receive **no reward at all**. The usefulness or size of the external charitable act is not that which determines its reward. The **heart attitude** is that single factor that determines the **reward** for the action that **meets other's needs**.

Hypocrisy.

The hypocrisy Jesus is dealing with is the hypocrisy based on a **concern for man's reaction** being **greater** than their concern for **God's reaction**. But it **pretends** to be just the opposite.

We could easily display lots of scriptures about why doing things because others are watching is dangerous. The fear of man is a snare. Caring that others **think highly of us** and **like us** and **accept us** is always a danger.

Living to accomplish those things is the wrong focus. Living in fear that we will **lose the rewards others can give us** is also a huge problem.

Think of all the things you have done in your life to win another person's approval that you now regret. Think of the mistakes that **concern for other's opinion of you** has led you into. There are so many embarrassing and disgraceful things we have done in that realm. Our world calls it **peer pressure**, as if there is something out there that causes these good kids to do bad things. But really it is the **self serving desire** in us to live for **another's approval** or to live in the **fear of facing rejection**. That is the real problem. It is a heart problem. And it is caused by worshipping the wrong thing. It focuses ones mind on **human opinion** and allows **those opinions** to direct one's path.

Some live in hypocrisy, pretending to do something **for God** but really doing it because of **fear of others**. Fear of their rejection. Fear of their response.

Jesus says this about that.

Luke 12:4-7 (NKJV)

4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

7 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Luke 12:8-9 (NKJV)

8 "Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.

9 But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

Here Jesus gives us the remedy to the hypocrisy that is **caused by fear of man**. **Fear better**. Make your **fear choices** more logical. Only choose **smart fear**. Fear God. Then you have nothing left to fear.

But this kind of fear is not the only source of hypocrisy.

The Pharisees were focused on the approval of others. But theirs may not have been as much a **fear of man** as a **selfish pride**. They wanted to be **worshipped**. **They wanted everyone to think as well of them as they thought of themselves**. So they pretended a **greater spirituality** than they really had. They did things to **win mans' worship** that they would have never done from **love for God**. But do you see how it is still all **man** oriented. It is all **man** focused. It is all **man** motivated.

This is the kind of hypocrisy that Jesus is talking about. One that pretends to be spiritual **in front of man** to win the **approval of man**, to get the reaction they are after **by man**. And if the audience did not exist, the act would not be done.

Which leads us to the truth we have often stated. **We are most truly what we are when no one is looking.**

In Isaiah we are given an explanation of religious hypocrisy. Jesus refers to it as hypocrisy in Mark 7:6 when He quotes it.

Isaiah 29:13 (NKJV)

13 Therefore the LORD said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

Here is the essence of the problem. Hypocrisy is caused by a **disconnect** with the **actions** and the **heart**.

The people **say** the right things. They **draw near** the things of God. They hang out in the **spiritual circles**. They say the **spiritually right** things. They do the **spiritually expected** things. They are careful not to break the codes. They wear the Christian Tshirts and listen to Christian music. But there is no **congruence**. There is no real driving **fear of God**. The real fear of God, and its resulting actions, is replaced with a cold formalism of **obeying codes of men**. And it results in an **outward display** of spirituality without the **Holy Spirit** behind it. The **outward display** replaces the **inward vitality** of living in relationship to God. And that **living in relationship to God** is what Christ is calling us all back to in this chapter.

So hypocrisy is spiritual pretending.

Hypocrisy is acting better than we are.

Hypocrisy is saying we are doing something **because we love God** but there is really a different reason.

How do we know if we are being hypocritical?

Would you do the charitable work you are doing if no one would ever find out?

When you do the charitable work, are you pleased in the doing of it because you know that God is pleased? Does that thought carry the day no matter what others might think about it or say about it..... or not say about it?

When you do the charitable work, do you try to do it in a way that, if at all possible you can keep it silent? Or do you do it in a way to subtly let people know you did it?

I am struggling at this point to bring our **own** hypocrisy, **my** own hypocrisy, out into the open. Have you ever noticed that hypocrisy is always **someone else's** sin? It is so hard to see in one's self. We tend to assume that we have good motives for what we do. We believe our own theories about ourselves. We just do.

I think the clearest test to see it in ourselves is not to look at our motives. We must look at our motives. But it is easy to deceive ourselves. The best test is to look at our **actions** and **reactions**. What clues would the pharisees have had that what they were doing was hypocritical? **Trumpets** might be a clue. Making sure there is a crowd around when they put their money in the plate might be a clue. If they had just looked at that, they could have easily known there was no congruence. They were not doing these things for God, no matter how spiritual they looked. The clues were right there. And clues like that will be in our lives as well if we are hypocritical. We will see them if we have the courage to look.

We have to assume that our hearts are sneaky and start there.

When you are talking to someone, watch what comes out of your mouth.

Watch especially for **exaggeration**. Watch for explanation of motive that is **all in our favor**. Watch for presentation of holiness to impress others.

What all of that is is **incongruence**. It is allowing what we want others to think of us to be more impressive than **what we really are**. It is those places where the truth about ourselves isn't quite good enough. We speak in such a way to make **our goodness** to look better than it is and our **badness** to not be as bad as it really is. That is all hypocrisy. No trumpets are needed.

Where do you fail to represent yourself as you truly are in an attempt to win the approval of people?

Now in the world, we sometimes have a legitimate reason to hide things. We certainly do not want to be perfectly transparent all the time. You don't owe all the truth all the time. But that is not what we are talking about. We are talking about incongruence that is caused by fleshly desires. And I think it is

safe to say that there are **topics** for all of us where we are tempted to be hypocritical. There are conversations where who we really are **will not come out**. And our reasons are self serving.

Augustine said this: "**The love of honor is the deadly bane of true piety. Other vices bring forth evil works but this brings forth good works in an evil way**" Hypocrisy is so dangerous because it is so deceptive. It uses things that are basically good for purposes that are basically evil.

"Hypocrisy," he goes on to say, "is the homage that vice pays to virtue."

I like this. **Hypocrisy brings forth good works in an evil way.**

You know the thing that is so amazing about all this is how **little reason** we have to be hypocritical. What approval does a human being need most in life? The answer is easy. If I asked question properly Eli and Wyatt would surely get it right, and maybe Katrina and Carter.

We need **God's** approval. We need Him to accept us into relationship with Him.

And whose approval is impossible to **earn**? Obviously it is God's. Our sin has separated us from God and we cannot undo it.

Yet who loved us to the degree that He crossed **that gap that we could not cross** by spending a price which we could never deserve?

Obviously **God** did.

Romans 5:8-11 (NKJV)

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

¹¹ And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

We have been reconciled to God by the work of Jesus Christ. If we are followers of Christ we are in relationship with God, He whose approval is impossible to earn.

Now how much do the opinions of **other human beings** play into God's acceptance of us? Do we need **their approval** to be approved by God?

No

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (NKJV)

²¹ Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God,

²² **who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.**

OK So you and I as believers have the approval of almighty God. We are in relationship with Him. And there is no human opinion that will affect that relationship in any way. So we **do not need** that human approval to maintain that which is most important.

Now what logical reason would cause us to be incongruent? What **reason** do we have to pretend to be anything that we are not? What **reason** do we have to **pretend** that our virtues are **greater** than they are and our failures are **less** than they are?

There are not **any** logical reasons. We are only left with **fleshly** reasons. We want what we want from other humans and sometimes we feel like we must deceive them to get them.

But my point is- you and I are **free to be** exactly what we are **in Christ**. No one in this world is as free as you and I are to be exactly what we are in Christ. Might some people in the church do wrong things with that congruence that we display. Well yes of course. Just like we might do that with someone else's vulnerabilities and confessed weaknesses. But the point is we are loved by God exactly as we are. It is even better than Mr Rogers liking us just the way we are. God knows **what we are** and **still loves us**. He removes all the reason for **hiding**. He removes all the reasons for **creating unrealistic impressions**. He removes all the reasons for **pretending**. And He creates a platform where believers can **fellowship at the deepest level this world affords**. We can walk in the light. We can walk in truth and honesty. Can we be hurt in the church by doing that? Yes we can. And we may have to make adjustments in love to not play into other people's weaknesses. But at the end of the day we can live like people **who are loved and accepted** just as we are by **He who knows us completely**. Any harm that we experience at the hands of our brothers and sisters is forgivable.

Now we must continue to watch for hypocrisy inside the church. The elders, especially must watch out for the hypocrisy of wolves.

1 Timothy 4:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ **Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,**

² **speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,**

³ **forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.**

Some will be led aside from the truth. Fortunately what they declare will give them away. They will preach heresies. They will preach **lies**. And behind all that is **hypocrisy**. They will **pretend** to be of us. They will **pretend** to be saved through grace by faith, but they are pretending. That is not really where their hearts are. So we are told that hypocrisy has always been a problem and it will be a problem until Christ comes back. But this kind of hypocrisy in the last text we read is the hypocrisy of unbelievers, not believers.

OK let's see if we can finish up on our text.

² Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

³ But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Verse 3 tells us to keep what we are doing a secret. Why would that be? I think it is for the self assurance of knowing what our motives **really are**. Would God care that other people knew what we did? Would it hurt his cause? No. It would not affect Him. **We** are the people with the questionable motives and the sneaky hearts. **We** are the people who need protected against ourselves. **We** are the people who have trouble figuring out why we did something. Some of us may tend to ascribe **better** motives for what we do and some of us may tend to ascribe **worse** motives for what we do. But if no one knows the deed we did, we can be more confident that we really did **the right thing for the right reason**. There is little selfish motive for keeping what we do a secret. There is little evil motive for good things done secretly. So secrecy is for our benefit, for our assurance. It isn't that the secrecy impresses God. Secrecy is for our benefit to assure us we are doing good things for the right reasons.

Now does this mean there is never a reason to tell someone? For instance if our check does not clear should we refuse to make contact with the ministry we are trying to support? Or should a husband not tell his wife that he withdrew money from the account to take care of a need if she takes care of the checkbook. Again, like the rest of the sermon on the mount, I do not believe Jesus is laying out laws. What He is telling us in these three chapters does not direct what we do in every single situation. No, He is teaching us how to live in general terms. He is telling us how we should think and act

unless there are other factors in play that would be reasonable and not hypocritical to take another path.

But all the time we must watch. Because, well, our hearts are tricky.

Now remember that Matt 5:16 told us to **let our light so shine among men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**

Now we are told to do our charitable giving in secret.

Do these contradict each other?

I think this is an easy apparent contradiction to undo. Both have to do with flesh. There are good works that we do in public where the doing of them **costs our flesh**. An example might be making a public confession. We may do a thing at great cost to ourselves that we **only do** because we are obedient to Christ. We may not **desire** to do such a thing, but we know that Christ is worthy of it so we do it. And that is our light so shining among men. That is a good thing.

Then we have **other things** where we may **desire those things** to be seen for fleshly reasons, but to make sure our motives are pure we **deny ourselves** of any fleshly incentive for doing the right thing.

B. Bruce said this and I think it is helpful "We are to show **when tempted to hide** and hide when **tempted to show**"

Now why should we do charitable works at all? Why should we give the money we worked so hard for to someone else. Why should we love others with our resources?

I think the last verse in the last Chapter explains that.

Matthew 5:48 (NKJV)

48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

We are to reflect the character of God in our lives. **We** are to be loving because **He** is loving. But look at what our text says. It does not leave us without incentives. We cannot allow the opinions of others to **play a part** in our incentives. Those are the **wrong** incentives. And they have to do with what a human can provide for Himself. There is nothing about faith in those decision. We are just doing what the tax collectors would do, what the pharisees would do.

No

Here is our incentive.

your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

This motive requires faith. This motive says **I trust God and God alone** to make this action worthwhile. I have no other reason for doing it.

A good test of whether something is faithful or not is to determine that, if there is no God, would the action be a complete waste to your personal happiness. If there is no God, and you give money away in secret which no one else knows about, it would be a complete waste to you. You have squandered resources that could have been used for your personal pleasure. But if there **is** a Father in heaven, you will **receive a reward** that lasts forever. You can know that giving charitable gifts given in such a way is **by faith**. And this is reinforced by this passage.

Revelation 4:10-11 (NKJV)

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

We ultimately do these charitable gifts because we will be rewarded. And that reward will be given to us so we can give **even greater glory** to the God who deserves all glory.

This week we have another week to look at our service to Christ. Let's look at any of the charitable gifts we believe we are giving. Did we do them in secret as much as is possible? Could we have kept them in secret but chose not to? Why? Would we have still done them if others disapproved of them or did not appreciate them?

I pray that we find **hypocrisy** where it exists and we find **faith** where it exists. Where we find **hypocrisy**, we need to **repent**.

Where we find **faith**, we need to **praise God** because we did not put that there. **He did**.