

Series: Sermon on the Mount
Title: A Secret Work, an Open Reward
Scripture: Matthew 6: 1-4
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More than even the more profane sins which men are guilty of, the Lord and his messengers deal more with the sin of self-righteousness than anything else. Self-righteous practice is the result of self-righteous doctrine.

In the former chapter, the Lord Jesus Christ exposed the false doctrine of self-righteous men. They falsely taught the word of the Lord so as to bring the holiness required by God to a level low enough to make religious people think they can actually make themselves accepted with God by their own righteousness.

Corrupt doctrine promotes fleshly ambition. Ambition creates religious competition between self-righteous men and women. To achieve the goal—to win the prize—is to be the most esteemed by others just like you. In order to be esteemed others have to see your good deeds.

So those who put corrupt doctrine into practice make sure others see their religious actions. The ones who are truly successful in the world's religion are those who have mastered the disguise of false humility so that they make others see while appearing as though they do not want others to see.

In the last chapter he dealt with the false doctrine. In this chapter, he deals with this practice of self-righteous ambition. He uses three examples—alms, prayer and fasting—but the point applies to all our actions in religion. Whatsoever you do, do not do it, to be seen of men.

In this study we will look only at alms.

Matthew 6: 1: Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2: Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3: But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

ALMS

This is the act of giving to provide for the poor.

Various translations use various words for “alms” such as: charitable deeds, piety, good actions, kindness. But the word “alms” is translated from a root word that agrees with the context of how sinners are saved by God. That word is “elehos”—mercy.

Mercy which manifests itself in action. The Jews called this act of alms giving righteousness. It is a action that is right. Providing for the poor ought to be performed. Withholding from the poor is not right. When we read of the "mammon of unrighteousness" it is not possessions unrightly gotten but unrightly kept from the poor.

But the self-righteous thought—and still do—that they were made fit heirs for heaven and entitled to eternal glory by their righteous deeds. Scripture says,

Titus 3: 5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy [not righteous acts by us, but by God's mercy, by God's giving to his desperately poor elect] he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6: Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7: That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

I. THE LORD WARNS THE BELIEVER OF WHAT WE SHOULD NEVER DO.

Matthew 6: 1: Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

DO NOT YOUR DEEDS OF MERCY TO BE SEEN OF MEN

Anything that the believer does in order to gain the applause of men, for the purpose of building up a good name among men, is for the glory of 'self' instead of for the glory of God.

OTHERWISE YE HAVE NO REWARD OF YOUR FATHER

If a persons acts of mercy—or even an whole assemblies acts of mercy—are not performed by the power of God's grace then from the beginning, they are operating from a mere view of glorifying self.

When self, instead of the glory of God, is the chief end of any action then it cannot be called a good work, nor will God regard it. A good work is done by the power of God's free grace for the glory of God and results in God giving the reward of more grace.

When the act is performed to be seen of men, and men praise you for it, the flesh is so puffed up in pride then all a person continues to see is self, instead of Christ. It was not of grace and there is no reward of grace-upon-grace by which the believer is made to see the glory of Christ—which is the reward the believer seeks.

If an individual, or even an assembly, desires the reward—the prize—of being highly esteemed and praised by men then the praise of men will be their only reward. It is all you wanted and it is all you get. Since we sought not God's glory but our own, we must expect noting from God.

Matthew 6: 2: Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

II. THE LORD TELLS THE BELIEVER WHAT WE SHOULD DO.

Matthew 6: 3: But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4: That *thine* alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

KEEP YOUR ALMS GIVING A PRIVATE MATTER BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

If we performed an act of mercy in such secrecy that our own left hand did not know what our own right hand had done, that would be of utmost secrecy. That is exactly the utmost secrecy that the Lord is teaching. Keep it from yourself. So far from making a display of it, dwell not on it even in thine own thoughts, lest it minister to spiritual pride.

The sinful flesh of every believer is so full of deceit that if you make others the first to know, or make your generous actions first in your thoughts, you can be certain that your own deceitful heart will make sure you are the last to know that you are walking in the pride and vanity of your own mind.

THY FATHER SEETH IN SECRET

Just because no one else sees your kind act or generosity, God sees. God knows the heart. He put the grace there. God knows the amount. He put it in your hand. God knows the deed. He gave you grace to perform it.

THY FATHER WHICH SEETH IN SECRET SHALL REWARD THEE OPENLY.

The reward we have of God is Christ Jesus. The grace which God gives so that the believer willingly acts in mercy to the needy is grace given in Christ, by Christ, and to the praise of Christ. The way it works is, as God gives the believer grace to give alms, the reward is more grace to behold in our acts of mercy, not ourselves, but the unspeakable gift which God gave to us in his Son.

Let me ask you to turn to two scriptures with me and we will see this open reward. First, the Lord Jesus Christ is the good and righteous GodMan. He hath dispersed to us poor sinners: deprived of clothing so he robed us in his garment of righteousness, deprived of food so he feeds us the Bread from heaven, deprived of shelter so he makes us to abide in him continually. His righteousness--his giving to us poor sinners--endureth forever. His horn shall be exalted with honor.

Psalm 112: 9: He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

Now we see from the parenthesis in this text, that it is from Christ Jesus the good and righteous man that we have all things--spiritual and temporal--so as to abound to this good work of providing for the poor. The open reward is that it causes many other needy sinners to thank God for his grace toward you. And the Lord sanctifies this act of mercy to cause us to behold God's unspeakable gift--his Son--which he gave to us poor sinners. The reward is grace, grace and more grace.

2 Corinthians 9: 7: Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8: And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work: 9: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. 10: Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) 11: Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. 12: For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God [results in many thanking God]; 13: Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*; 14: And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15: Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Luke 14:14: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

After our Lord said that, Luke records that someone said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." And our Lord answered with his parable that declared you will not be recompensed with eating, but you will sit at the table of King Jesus and he himself shall serve thee. He is our recompense of reward.

MEN WHO WANT TO BE SEEN DO NOT WANT TO BE WITH GOD THEY WANT TO BE GOD. THE BELIEVERS REWARD IS GOD OUR SAVIOR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF.