

Lesson 12: Secret Piety (Giving, Praying, Fasting)

Matthew 6:1-18

I. PRACTICING YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS—Doing good things for the *right reasons*

- A. When You Give**—It is the nature of love to give; God expects us to love one another.
- B. When You Pray**—Prayer is an act of worship and is supposed to humble us; God expects us to pray.
- C. When You Fast**—Fasting is supposed to humble us and help us seek God; You can't seek God while you are looking to men for approval!

II. THE NATURE OF GOD

A. He is your Father. (10 x in 8 verses)

- 1. **Father is Personal**—God the Father is a Person who may be known.
- 2. **Father is Relational**—not distant but related and intimately involved
- 3. **Father Implies authority and benevolent care**—protection, provision, affection

B. He sees in secret. (Heb 4:13)

- 1. **Omniscient**—all-knowing; nothing is hidden from His sight
- 2. **Attentive**—not passive, general knowledge but interested intimate attention

C. He is in secret.

- 1. **Unseen**—We perceive/believe in Him by faith.
- 2. **Present**—He is really there, even though he is not physically discernible.

D. He will reward you (Jer 29:31; Heb 11:6; Jam 4:8)

- 1. **Faith in God assumes expectation of reward.**
- 2. **True piety is relational, not a random list of merit-earning behavior.**
- 3. **The reward of piety is also relational.**

III. **THE DANGER OF HYPOCRISY**—a continual threat to our souls and to our witness

A. The Use of the Word—a masked actor who performs in a play; insincere pretender

B. The Matter of Motive (1 Sam 16:7)—Righteousness is about relationship.

1. Because you love God (good)—the greatest commandment

Piety is “dutiful devotion to God and observance of religious principles” (Farlex).

2. Because you love your neighbor (good)—the second greatest commandment

Charity is “provision of help or relief to the poor; almsgiving” (Farlex).

3. Because you seek the praise of men (*not good*) (Pro 29:25)

Your motive is often the indicator of your idolatry; God will not reward insincerity.

C. The Issue of Audience

1. Things that do not impress God:

a. Fanfare for your giving

b. Length and wording of your prayers

c. Mournful religious face when fasting

2. What God does desire:

a. The honor of His name

b. The spread of His kingdom

c. Right relationship with other people

d. A desire for holiness

D. The Test of Secrecy—Character is what you do when (you think) no one is watching.

1. Will you do it if no one is watching? *Is it worth doing if no one else can see?*

2. Do you believe that God is real and that He sees you? *What you do in secret shows what you really believe.*

3. Do you believe that God will reward you? *Is His blessing worth it?*

4. When was the last time that you did anything *in secret out of love* for God that *only He* could see?