

Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

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.

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your

Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

7 "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

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16 "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Community Group Study 25 July 2010



Introduction

Jesus speaks about giving, praying and fasting and how Christians should do these the right way in the light of the gospel. We ought to do these things not to appear spiritual, but to approve ourselves only in God's eyes.

We serve not just a crucified saviour, but a risen one also. This living saviour commends us to live under the eye of a happy, glorious, all-powerful God.

Do not let our giving, praying and fasting become worthless in God's sight. Our reconciliation to God is not earned by our works, but is a spiritual response to God's free grace. Performing good works for men to see and approve denies grace and glorifies man. Even if we tell nobody, but consume our thoughts with our goodness, we elevate ourselves in our hearts.

When we pray, it is not about time, formula or words, but about relationship and love. Talking with God is life and worship, and about knowing who He really is and what He really wants and how He really acts. Knowing God, we ought to dare to pray for anything, because He hears our cry and He reveals Himself to us.

When we fast, we remember that there is someone we desire more than all God's good gifts and remind ourselves that there is a greater reality than this passing world. By all this, God rewards us with Himself, the greatest gift we can ever possess.

Discussion

- >>Are giving, praying and fasting regular and essential parts of our lives as disciples?
- >>How do we misuse valid Christian practice to pursue personal glory and honour?
- >>Compare the reward of doing good works before men with the reward of doing good works before God.

Explanation

- >>How has God already affirmed us far more than anyone else can?
- >>What are these "empty phrases" that the gentiles use in prayer?
- >>What does it mean to live under God's eye?

Application

- >>Consider how much you desire affirmation from other people and ask God to replace it with the desire for the affirmation of God.
- >>Remind yourself that dwelling on our own good works is a form of seeking man's approval.
- >>Give generously, to things that God directs you to.
- >>Pray often, and dare to ask God for much and expect to hear from Him.
- >>Fast regularly, denying what is good in order to realize that there is a greater reality.