



In today's passage, we see Jesus teaching the nature of true righteousness and the motives behind our actions. In these verses, He cautions us against practicing our righteousness for public recognition. Instead, he instructs us to demonstrate a sincere, private devotion that seeks only God's approval. Our study today leads us to consider the nuances of Jesus' instruction, exploring the dangers of hypocrisy and the importance of our intentions regarding our acts of kindness.

Key Passage: Matthew 6:1-4

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of acts is Jesus referring to in these verses? What motives is Jesus warning us against?

In today's passage, Jesus instructs His followers to carry out their good deeds with love and compassion, with God's approval in mind rather than recognition from others. His teaching emphasizes the importance of authenticity, humility, and selfless motivation behind our acts of righteousness.

2. What are the implications of Jesus' words, "when you give to the needy?" What does a lack of generosity say about a Christian?

The phrase "when you give to the needy" in today's passage implies that generosity is an expected and regular part of a Christian's life – a central element to living out our faith. A lack of generosity suggests deeper issues related to disobedience, lack of compassion, materialism, poor understanding of stewardship, or weak faith. Christians are called to reflect Christ's love and generosity, serving others selflessly and trusting in God's provision.

3. What can we learn about generosity from 2 Corinthians 8:2-5 and 9:7?

The Macedonian churches were experiencing severe trials and extreme poverty, yet their generosity "welled up" in abundance. Their overflowing joy, combined with their poverty, resulted in rich generosity. They gave beyond their ability, indicating a sacrificial nature to their giving. The Macedonians urgently pleaded for the opportunity to contribute. They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to the apostles.

That said, giving should be a personal decision made in the heart rather than external pressures. It should not be done reluctantly or under compulsion. Generosity should flow from a willing heart, free from obligation or reluctance. God loves a cheerful giver. This underscores that the attitude behind the giving is as important as the act itself. God values the joy and willingness behind our generosity.

4. When it comes to giving, what does it mean when Jesus says, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing? How is this command a means for guarding our hearts against pride?

When Jesus says, "don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," He teaches us to give with humility and pure motives, avoiding the desire for recognition. This command guards our hearts against pride by encouraging secrecy, fostering humility, ensuring our motives remain pure, and maintaining our spiritual focus on God's approval rather than human praise. By practicing this principle, we follow in the footsteps of Christ, who loved selflessly and generously.

5. How does Jesus' warning in today's passage compare to His command to let our light shine so that others can see our good works (Matthew 5:15-16)?

When considered together, Jesus' teachings in Matthew 6:1-4 and Matthew 5:15-16 give us a guide for living out our faith. They encourage us to perform good works with pure motives, to maintain humility, and to ensure that our public lives point others to God rather than ourselves. By balancing these principles, we can live authentically, bringing glory to God through private devotion and good works done in public.

6. How could you be tempted to intentionally demonstrate your righteousness in front of others in your workplace, among your friend group, or at church? Why does Jesus call those who draw attention to their good works hypocrites? What role does social media play as a temptation to show off our good works?

Jesus' warning against demonstrating our righteousness for recognition's sake is a call to integrity and genuineness. The temptation to show off our good works is a common temptation that often leads to hypocrisy when they are done purely for show. When someone performs righteous acts to be seen by others, their external actions do not match their internal motivations. By aligning our actions with sincere motives and seeking God's approval over human praise, we can practice true righteousness that honors God and reflects a genuine heart of service.

7. What faith practices might we be tempted to turn into a performance for others? Why is seeking recognition from others such a danger to our spiritual health?

Jesus highlights the danger of turning faith practices (public prayer, giving, fasting, church attendance, serving on the Dream Team, sharing our faith, and reading Scripture publicly) into performances for others.

Seeking recognition from others distorts motives, encourages pride, undermines our relationship with God, creates hypocrisy, and hinders spiritual growth. By focusing on genuine, humble, and private expressions of faith, we can maintain the integrity of our spiritual practices and ensure that they honor God above all.

8. Why would someone who intentionally practiced their good deeds, even though it was from the wrong motivation, receive no reward from God? Isn't giving still a good thing to do?

While giving is a good act, its motivations are crucial in determining its spiritual value. When done with the wrong motives, such as seeking recognition, it loses its integrity as a righteous act. It does not receive a reward from God. True giving should be an act of worship, reflecting God's selfless love and done with a sincere heart. By aligning our motives with God's will and practicing private, humble giving, we honor God and fulfill the deeper spiritual purpose of our good deeds.