

To be Seen by God or Others?

Jesus Says: A Series on the Sermon on the Mount Part 8

Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

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We all love to be noticed.

- If you're around a two-year-old kid for very long you will hear, "Look at me." One of the very first things we say as humans is a call for others to notice us.
- This is true for all of us always. We love being noticed.
 - Ladies, if you get a new haircut you want people to notice.
 - Guys, if you've been working out and are trying to slim down, you like to be noticed.
- We love being noticed. We've all seen people with hairstyles, clothing, trucks, and much more that want us to be noticed.
- We all love when we get retweets, likes, and shares.

In the Church we like to be noticed.

- Like all humans, we as Christians like to be noticed. We love when people see the good things we do.
- John Crist video about why people go on mission trips - "Honest Mission Trip Leader"¹
 - In a missions class my professor (long term missionary) lamented the fact that many of the short term missionaries that came his way were most interested in taking pictures with African kids. I had a classmate that said out loud in class, "Oh no." His profile picture was him with about 20 African kids

Doing the right things for the wrong reasons

- Do you always do good things for the right reasons? In other words, do you always have the purest motivation when doing good things.
- Do we serve, love, and live to be noticed, or because it's the right thing to do.
- When you're about to do something good, is one of your first thoughts, "Does anyone see me?" or "I can't wait to post this on Instagram!"
- This is a question that really convicted me a couple of years ago and has since bothered me periodically. I wondered if I do the right things for the right reasons.
 - My number one love language is words of affirmation.
 - If you're not familiar with love languages, one's love language is the way in which someone gives love and feels loved the best.
 - Quality time, gifts, words of affirmation, physical touch, acts of service
 - This means that I crave people's affirmation and encouragement.

¹John Crist, "Honest Mission Trip Leader." *johnbcrist*, YouTube, October 19, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcAYeKMJbgY.

- My main temptation is to avoid conflict at all costs and to receive praise or affirmation.
- A few years ago it hit me that the reason I do many of the good things I do were, at least partly, done for the wrong reasons. I often times will do good things with the hope that people would say nice things about me.
 - “Ryan, thank you so much; You’re so great.”
- This was convicting to me because I really did want to help a friend move, or give a homeless guy a place to stay, but I also really loved getting attention and praise from it.
- I really resonated with what David Platt said in an interview: “John 3:30 says, ‘He must become greater; I must become less.’ I really believe and think in my heart that I want Christ to become greater, but I am tempted at every turn (and this was before anyone was listening to me for that matter) to turn that around and say, ‘He must become greater and I wouldn’t mind becoming greater in the process, too’ as opposed to he must become greater and I must become less.”²
- I love making much of God, but when I make much of God people make much of me, and I really like that.
- I think we might all struggle with doing good things for the wrong reasons.
- What are some works that you struggle doing for the wrong reasons?

Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

- We’re all tempted to do the right things for the wrong reasons.
- Jesus addresses this problem in our text tonight.
- Jesus addresses three good things that people are to do, but often do for the wrong reasons.
- Tonight we’re going to discuss these three good things we’re to do, how we might be able to do them with proper motivations, and a couple of principles we can learn from this text.

GOOD WORKS WE DO FOR THE WRONG REASON

- Are you actually doing these things?
- In this passage Jesus is addressing the wrong motivations behind these good works, but Jesus is assuming that you will be doing these things.
- Two dangers of applying this text:
 - If you’re doing these things for the wrong reasons, don’t stop doing these good things. Change your motivations.
 - Assuming that everyone who fasts, prays, and gives are doing it for the wrong reasons, and therefore don’t do these things.

² “Celebrity Pastor: Indecent Exposure?” *Together for the Gospel*, 2012, accessed on November 1, 2017, <http://t4g.org/media/2012/05/celebrity-pastor-indecnt-exposure-2/>.

Giving (6:1-4)

- Are you giving to others?
- Jesus wants us to serve his people.
- We serve Jesus when we serve others.
 - *Matthew 25:40* - “As you did it to one of the least of these, my brothers, you did it to me.”
- How to have the right motivation about giving:
 - When you’re about to help someone, ask yourself this: “Do I care more about this person or what others think about me?”
 - So many people give so others think they’re awesome.
 - Don’t give to people so that you can think highly of yourself, and don’t do it for the praise, do it because God loves this person, and you are blessed by God to help them.

Praying (6:5-15)

- I won’t spend too much time on this passage tonight since next week we will spend an entire lesson on The Lord’s Prayer.
- Pharisees would often pray very loudly so that everyone could hear them. They did it for show.
- The times when we probably pray the most in public is at meals.
 - Do you do this to impress others in the restaurant or to check off a checklist so you can eat, or to genuinely thank God for blessing you with your daily bread?
- If the only time you pray is in public with other people, you need to reevaluate your prayer life.
- How to have the right motivation about praying:
 - Stop, and think about who you are praying to.
 - Francis Chan in *Crazy Love* tells his readers to stop praying, to not pray until they really focus on God comprehend that they’re speaking to the creator and lord of literally everything.³
 - When you realize who you’re praying to and who’s your audience, you will not care at all about whether or not others see you.

Fasting (6:16-18)

- The greek word that translates to hypocrites was the word people used for actors. They had multiple faces/masks.
- Pharisees would often fast twice a week, and they would exaggerate their hunger. They did it for the wrong reasons.
- This may be the least applied spiritual discipline Christians practice today.

³ Francis Chan, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God* (Colorado Spring, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 27-28.

- People fast in the Bible for multiple reasons:
 - To ask for forgiveness
 - To thank God
 - To ask God for direction
- Ultimately fasting says this: “God, I need you more than food, social media, chocolate, anything.

3 PRINCIPLES FROM THIS TEXT

God notices you.

- God notices you. Some of you need to hear this. Some of you might think that you don’t have many friends and that no one would ever see you. God does.
- God is omnipresent and omnipotent. This means God is everywhere and all-knowing.
 - Three times (in 6:4, 6, 18) Jesus says, “Father who sees.”
- That is both comforting and troubling. God knows all of our secret sin, and God knows all of our works.
- At times you might think when you’re working really hard and serving others, “Does anyone even know I’m helping? Does any of this even matter?”
- There was once a lady at our church who always replaced the attendance, prayer, and encouragement cards at our church. One day she got pretty sick and was unable to stock the cards. When the pews were card-less people started wondering about who actually restocked the cards. No one knew who it was that restocked the pews.
- Even when no one else notices you, God notices you. God doesn’t ignore you. Don’t get discouraged. God knows your good works.
- *1 Corinthians 15:58* - “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

You will get the reward you seek.

- If you want to receive the reward of notoriety, you’ll get it. If you want people to see how great your works are, you’ll get that reward.
 - 6:2, 5, 16
- But if you do these good works for God, God will reward you.
- You’re giving up the greater reward for the lesser reward.
 - C.S. Lewis - “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”⁴

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperOne, 1949), 26.

People should notice God, not us.

- One might think there is a small contradiction here in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - Where might there be a problem with this teaching?
 - In 5:16 Jesus says, “Let your light shine before others.” Don’t put that light under a basket.
 - In chapter 5 it seems that Jesus is telling us to let people see our good works, but in chapter 6 it seems that Jesus is telling us to not let others see our good works.
 - The whole verse of 5:16 says, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.”
- There is no contradiction. Jesus wants our good works to point to God for his glory. The goal is God’s glory, not our glory.
- Wouldn’t it be great that if people saw what we did as a ministry and thought, “God is good.”
- Or individually, when they see our good works, they say, “God is good.”