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# MOTIVES IN GIVING

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## Questions:

- 1) What are the two major topics in Jesus' sermon on the mount?
- 2) In Mt 5, what things will change when the kingdom of heaven arrives?
- 3) In Mt 6, what things must change when the kingdom arrives?
- 4) Mt 5 deals with moral issues. What does Mt 6 deal with?
- 5) Someone once said about good deeds, "If you tell it, you can't count it." Is this always true?
- 6) Jesus said, "Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing." What does this mean?
- 7) What does God see in secret?
- 8) What are the two basic ways of acquiring wealth?

## INTRODUCTION

### **Matthew 6:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

<sup>3</sup> But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

<sup>4</sup> that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

With the beginning of Mt 6 we find a shift in what Jesus is teaching. You will recall the theme of the "Sermon on the Mount":

### **Matthew 5:17-20**

<sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

<sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

<sup>19</sup> Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>20</sup> For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

These verses deal with two major topics:

- **The fulfillment of the law**
- **The righteousness of the Pharisees.**

Mt 5:21-48 is devoted to showing how Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses.

Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses:

- **Retaining** the strong points
- **Strengthen** the weak points
- **Erasing** the bad points

Now beginning in Mt 6 we see Jesus giving some examples of how to exceed them in righteousness.

### **Matthew 6**

<sup>1</sup> "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, ...

<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do ...

<sup>5</sup> "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. ...

<sup>16</sup> "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. ...

## **Matthew 7:5**

<sup>5</sup> Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

## **SUMMARY**

To summarize:

- Mt 5: examples of fulfilling the Law.
- Mt 6: examples of exceeding the scribes and Pharisees.
  
- Mt 5: **things that will change** in the Law itself.
- Mt 6: **things that must change** in your attitude.

The kingdom would usher in both a new law and a new attitude.

- Mt 5 ends with: You must **be "perfect."**
- Mt 6 begins with: You must **be "careful."**

## **MORAL AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES**

In Mt 5 Jesus deals with **moral issues**:

- murder
- adultery
- divorcement
- lying
- retaliation
- hatred

Now in Mt 6 He begins to deal with **religious issues**:

- almsgiving
- praying
- fasting

Other translations bring this point out:

**Matthew 6:1 (NEB)**

<sup>6</sup> Be careful not to make a show of your religion.

**NOTE:** It is important to realize Jesus included two dimensions to "righteousness": (1) moral and (2) religious.

**(1) Some people act as though righteousness is strictly a moral issue.**

Religion has nothing to do with it (they think). They suppose if they are moral they can be saved without the church.

**(2) Others view righteousness as though it is strictly religious.**

They suppose as long as they attend services, pray and contribute it does not matter how they live their personal life.

Jesus teaches the righteousness necessary to enter the kingdom includes both moral and religious duties.

**TEXT (1)**

**Matthew 6:1**

<sup>1</sup> "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

**"charitable deeds"** – translated "*righteousness*" in other versions (ASV)

Jesus is laying down a general principle – a theme:

**"Don't do your righteousness before men to be seen by them."**

Then He proceeds to give three specific examples to demonstrate what He means:

- Don't give **alms** to be seen (vv2-4)
- Don't **pray** to be seen (vv5-8)
- Don't **fast** to be seen (vv16-18)

Jesus did not arbitrarily choose three different topics. He purposefully chose topics that deal with different areas of our lives:

- **almsgiving** – man's dealings with fellow men
- **prayer** – man's dealings with God
- **fasting** – man's dealings with himself

### **"TAKE HEED"**

**"Take heed"** indicates we are in great danger of erring at this very point! It is a great temptation to perform religious acts in order to be seen of men.

*"Glory seeking"* was the Pharisees' besetting sin.

#### **John 12:43**

<sup>43</sup> for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

### **"BEING SEEN"**

**"To be seen"** (θεάομαι) – from which we get the English word ***"theatrical."***

We are not to put on a performance for the benefit of others, or ourselves.

Wait a minute ... didn't Jesus say:

**Matthew 5:16**

<sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

On the one hand our righteousness is to be seen by men, but on the other hand it is not to be seen by men. What does Jesus mean?

- In Mt 5:16 Jesus is dealing with **cowardice**. We should not try to hide the fact that we are disciples of Christ.
- In Mt 6:1 Jesus is dealing with **vanity** (the other extreme). We are not to flaunt our religion so as to make a spectacle of ourselves.

To put it another way:

- In Mt 5 Jesus says to "**LET** your light shine,"
- In Mt 6 He forbids men to "**MAKE** your light shine."

We are not to go out of our way to recruit an audience.

A. B. Bruce:

*We are to "show when tempted to hide" and "hide when tempted to show."*

In either case we act so as to glorify God.

**(1) Why do we occasionally do good works in the open?**

So God will receive glory.

## **(2) Why do we occasionally keep good works a secret?**

So God will not be robbed of glory.

We must avoid veering to the right, or to the left. We cannot be cowards or braggarts.

**NOTE:** Jesus is emphasizing motives. He does not mean we have sinned if someone happens to discover our good deeds. He is emphasizing we should not be seeking praise from men and He uses alms giving as an example.

Neither is Jesus forbidding telling someone we performed a good deed.

**ILL:** One man taught: *"If you tell it, you can't count it."* Meaning if you ever tell of a good deed it will count for nothing in the eyes of God.

Such is not always the case. It depends on the motive behind the telling of a good deed. Paul took almost two entire chapters (2 Cor 11, 12) telling of great things he had done. But just because he told of them does not mean *"they don't count."*

- His motive was not to receive glory of men
- His motive was to prove he was truly an apostle of Christ.

## **"DOING RIGHTEOUSNESS"**

Notice Jesus said: **"Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men."**

I am greatly impressed by this statement. I learn from this that **righteousness is something that I do.**

In this day and time we are being bombarded with the idea that being right with God is a *"do nothing"* thing:

- Just believe and you'll be saved; don't work or you'll be lost.
- There's nothing you can do to save yourself.

- There's nothing you can do to be lost after you're saved.

Contrary to this popular belief I find righteousness is something that requires some "DOING".

### **Matthew 7:21**

<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but **he who does** the will of My Father in heaven.

Furthermore, I am impressed with the fact that righteousness is more than the absence of evil. It includes the presence of good.

Some men pride themselves in the fact that they have never done anything wicked:

- I don't **smoke**.
- I don't **drink**.
- I don't **cuss**.
- I don't **go to movies**.
- I don't **watch T.V.**
- I don't **wear immodest apparel**.
- I don't **break the speed limit**.
- I DON'T DO ANYTHING.

But righteousness is more than simply not doing evil. Righteousness includes "doing" things that are good:

### **Isalah 1:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> ... cease to do evil;

<sup>17</sup> Learn to do well ...

## **TEXT (2)**

### **Matthew 6:2**

<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

**alms** (ἐλεημοσύνη) – "*alms, charitable giving*"

There exists a relationship between righteousness and giving alms to the poor. The OT taught almsgiving in several ways:

- Dt 24:19-21 – The farmer was not allowed to reap his entire crop.
- Ex 23:11 – Every seventh year the land was to enjoy a Sabbath.
- Lev 25:37 – Interest was not to be charged to a fellow Israelite and especially to one who was poor.
- Dt 14:28-29 – A welfare tithe was to be collected every third year to care for the poor.
- Dt 15:13-14 – When Israelites freed a slave he must be sent out with a liberal gift.

Even Jesus and His disciples had a "money bag" from which they gave alms to poor people:

### **John 13:29**

<sup>29</sup> ... some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor.

These disciples had seen Jesus give out of the "*bag*" so frequently they thought that's why He sent Judas forth this time.

### **Deuteronomy 15:11**

<sup>11</sup> For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'

### **Psalms 41:1**

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is he who considers the poor;  
The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.

On and on such passages go. The OT packed full of such passages which taught almsgiving as a part of righteous living.

## **JESUS EXPECTS ALMS-GIVING**

**"when you do a charitable deed"** – not *"if you do a charitable deed."* Jesus expects His disciples to do this. This is an individual thing required of each one of us.

**(1) Many denominations have "benevolent committees"** to which their members may send some needy soul; no feeling of personal obligation.

**(2) Other congregations have one member who is overly generous** and everyone shoves the needy towards him; no feeling of personal obligation.

### **Galatians 6:10**

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

### **1 John 3:17**

<sup>17</sup> ... whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

This is not an option for us. It's not *"IF you give,"* but ***"WHEN you give."***

### **James 1:27**

<sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

## **"HYPOCRITES"**

**"hypocrites"** (ὕποκριτής) – *"an actor, interpreter, one who impersonates another"*

The hypocrite is acting like something he really isn't. He pretends he is concerned about poor folks, but he's not. All he really wants is for men to praise him. The NT gives an example:

- **Judas** criticized Mary for pouring costly oil on Jesus feet (Jn 12:3-6).
- **Ananias and Sapphira** pretended to bring all they acquired from the sale of land (Acts 5:1-5).

The hypocrite who gives alms does not pity the poor. He is not merciful. He cares not to do good. Perhaps this is what Paul meant:

### **1 Corinthians 13:3**

<sup>3</sup> And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

How can one *"bestow all his goods to feed the poor"* without love in his heart? Well, one way is to give to the poor to be seen of men.

### **"They have received their reward"**

**received** (ἀπέχω) – *"to receive payment in full"*

That is all the reward that can be expected. None will be given on Judgment Day.

- They sought the praise of men – they received the praise of men!
- They did NOT seek the praise of God – they are NOT praised by God.

## **TEXT (3)**

### **Matthew 6:3**

<sup>3</sup> But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

This prohibition is a little different than the one in v2.

- v2 – forbids seeking the **praise of others**
- v3 – forbids **praising ourselves**

***"Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."***

We all sort of despise the fellow who *"toots his own horn"* and advertises to everyone about his good deeds, BUT it is difficult to not admire ourselves.

We begin to think, *"I'm glad I'm not like others who boast and brag."*

Oops ... that kind of thinking makes us a Pharisee! Remember?

### **Luke 18:11**

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men ...

To *"not let our left hand know what our right hand does"* means we are not to be self-conscious about our giving, because our self-consciousness will turn into self-righteousness.

### **Jeremiah 17:9**

<sup>9</sup> "The heart is deceitful above all things,  
And desperately wicked;  
Who can know it?"

Our heart can deceive us. It is possible to take deliberate steps to keep our giving secret and all the while we feed a spirit of self-righteousness. We congratulate ourselves.

**THE CURE: Keep the giving secret from yourself as well as others.**

After writing out the check, then forget about it – don't gloat over it.

(Don't pull out your little book and give yourself a merit for having done a good deed and then give yourself an extra star for keeping it secret.)

**TEXT (4)**

**Matthew 6:4**

<sup>4</sup> that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

**"Your Father who sees in secret"**

How often we need to remember this! We need to instill this idea into the hearts of our children that God sees in secret. We need to remember it when we are tempted to sin.

- He sees **the evil** men do in secret
- He sees **the good** men do in secret

**Proverbs 15:3**

<sup>3</sup> The eyes of the LORD are in every place,  
Keeping watch on the evil and the good.

**Hebrews 4:13**

<sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

**"HE WILL REWARD YOU"**

**"He will reward thee"**

Of the good things which God beholds in secret, Jesus promised He would reward us for them.

It is taught by some that reward has no place in the motives of true believers. Some modern day philosophers are telling us:

*"You ought to do good simply for the sake of doing good, and for no other reason."*

We are told if we seek for a reward we are being selfish and we are concerned only with what we can get out of it.

Obviously this was not the philosophy of Jesus. He used both negative motivators (**hell**) and positive (**rewards in heaven**).

Mt 6 is not an isolated case where Jesus promised rewards for His people:

**Matthew 5:12**

<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for **great is your reward in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Matthew 10:42**

<sup>42</sup> And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose **his reward**."

The NT is full of such passages offering rewards in heaven for the faithful!

Concerning rewards we need to note two things:

**(1) Any action in life which does not achieve anything is worthless!**

(One person said: *"Unless a thing is good for something, it is good for nothing."*)

**(2) To banish all rewards would be to say injustice triumphs!**

- Philosophers: We should have no rewards.
- Jehovah's Witnesses: There is no hell.

If we say good men and bad men eventually end up the same we are saying, *"God doesn't care whether men are good or bad."*

Without rewards no one would have any special reason to choose one lifestyle over another.

### **A NOTE ON "REWARDS"**

Now, let me say a word about the "*reward*" which the Father will someday give.

In earthly life our wealth comes in one of two basic ways:

- By inheritance / gift
- By labor

(Lotto ticket? NO! ... only 2 legitimate ways!)

Even so, in the NT, the believer's wealth in heaven is described as both:

- An **inheritance** (a gift)
- A **reward** for faithful service

Everyone that goes to heaven shall receive an inheritance because they are a child of God.

On the other hand, there seems to be evidence that rewards are given for special service and are reserved for particular individuals.

#### **Matthew 10:41**

<sup>41</sup> He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a **prophet's reward**. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a **righteous man's reward**.

Apparently there are special rewards awaiting prophets. Other righteous men shall receive certain rewards designed especially for them.

Here in Matthew 6, Jesus promises there will be a special reward given to the man who would give alms in secret.

## **WHAT'S THE POINT?**

What's the point of v4?

Jesus is teaching we don't need to sound trumpets when doing good deeds because:

- **Our reward does not come from men** who will hear the trumpets.
- **God does not need a trumpet** to attract His attention.

Christians are not to keep track of good deeds as if God owes them a salary.

**FIRST: If we did every imaginable good deed on earth, God does not OWE us anything:**

### **Luke 17:10**

<sup>10</sup> So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'

**SECOND: Christians are not worried that God might cheat them out of a reward.**

**ILL:** The reason an employee keeps records of how much work he does is because he doesn't really trust the employer. He's afraid he might get cheated out of what he deserves, so he keep up with his own records.

As Christians, we are not worried God will cheat us. We are not worried He will forget what we have done.

### **Hebrews 6:10**

<sup>10</sup> For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love ...

We do not need to remind God with trumpets about how wonderful we are.

## "Reward thee openly"

- If we praise ourselves, we are praised by an audience of only one.
- If we seek praise from men, we are praised only by a small audience of men who know us and they soon forget.
- If we seek praise from God, we are praised by an immeasurable audience – all of heaven in front of all nations and it will last for all eternity.

## CONCLUSION

Jesus is saying one of three possibilities exist:

- v2 – we are seeking praise **from men**
- v3 – **from ourselves**
- v4 – **from God**

He warns us sternly our giving is not to be:

- Before men (waiting for the clapping to begin)
- Neither before ourselves (waiting for the left hand to applaud the right hand)

Our motive in giving is because we are sincerely concerned for the poor, and we want to please God. Surely this is what Jesus meant:

### **Matthew 5:8**

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.

Is your heart pure?

### **1 Peter 1:22**

<sup>22</sup> ... you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through ...

If you want your heart pure, you must obey the truth.