

NO ETERNAL REWARD FOR HYPOCRISY

After introducing the theme of “practicing righteousness” and not doing so in a “showy” way, the first issue of piety that Christ deals with is almsgiving.

Matthew 6:2 (NKJV)

2 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.

Almsgiving to the Jews was considered the height of personal piety. Jesus here rebukes the common practice of prominent Jews bringing great attention to themselves when they did some charitable deed. They did not want any good deed to go unnoticed.

Some think Jesus may be speaking metaphorically to emphasize that charitable giving is not to be publicized, which was indicative of hypocrites.

The Jews had chests in the temple which resembled a trumpet by which they received the offerings of people. These chests were trumpet-shaped with a wide opening where the coins were put in, and then narrowed to where they dropped into the chest. This was so that no one could stick their hand in and take the money.

Some point out that HYPOCRITES liked to convert their gifts into the largest number of coins possible and then noisily toss their coins in a prolonged way into the trumpet-shaped coffer, thus drawing attention to what a great giver they were.

The word “hypocrites” (Gk. *hypokrites*) refers to a play-actor – one who plays a role on the stage. A hypocrite is a player – an actor. He is a phony who pretends to be what he is not. Hypocrites who pretend to be all spiritual but are not are especially offensive to God. In Matt. 23 Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees in the harshest of terms because of their glaring hypocrisy (cf. Mt. 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). They were real religious players – the worst!

Jesus says those who put on a big hypocritical religious show have their reward. They want “glory from men” and that moment of “glory” is all they will receive. They have no reward from God. It’s all just a moment of fleeting human approval that doesn’t last. There is nothing more to come. That’s it! It’s over just that quick!

Get this point: God does not reward hypocrisy! There is no lasting reward for showboaters.

“A man came into my office one Sunday and told me it was his first time to worship with us and that he intended to make our church his church home. He then handed me a generous check, with the promise that I would receive one just like it every week. I told him I did not want to receive checks personally and suggested that he should give anonymously as the rest of the church family did.”– **John MacArthur**

I am always amazed at how many ministries publicize their BIG givers. That ruins it. As we see in the text, the issue is motives. Sometimes charitable deeds can't be hidden, but the motive should never be to draw attention to ourselves. That is the point.

When Jesus says, “when you do a charitable deed,” He expects that His disciples will be doing these things. In 5:16, Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” But note the emphasis – it is to be to the end that God's glory is promoted – not our own.

The issue is this: Are we really promoting the cause of Christ, or does this amount to “self-glorification”? That is always the issue!

When the motivation is that people take notice and give me some accolades, that is to the glory of self. There is no reward for self-glory! It is its own reward, which has no eternal reward.

“Though the works may be good, when the motivation is wrong, we have no reward from our Father in heaven.” – **Howard Vos**

The Chinese are known for emphasizing to their pastors: ***Don't touch the girls; don't touch the gold, and don't touch the glory.*** That is good counsel. Don't be a “glory robber” because all the glory belongs to God.

Matthew 6:3 (NKJV)

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

Jesus is making a point here. Don't be self-absorbed in your giving. Don't give it over attention. Don't be “self-conscious” about it. Of course, you are going to be intellectually aware, but the point is - don't be self-focused on it. Keep “selfism” out of it. Let your giving be done inconspicuously. Don't make too much out of it – even in your own mind.

Really, Jesus is using a form of hyperbole that implies absolute secrecy as He goes on to emphasize in verse 4. The issue is that our giving is not to be with mixed motives, but with pure motives that truly have God and God alone in view.

Matthew 6:4 (NKJV)

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

What we are in secret is what we really are before God – spiritually speaking. We still have the flesh and it can't be trusted. The only way you can really trust your motives is to keep your piety between you and God.

People want to be noticed. They want to be stroked. And indeed, we all need encouragement. But when it comes to giving Jesus is emphasizing that it is to be totally God-oriented. And the only way to ensure that is to do your giving in secret.

The issue here is all about motives. Do I do it to be seen by people. That is pride. That is about self-glory. That makes it about self and not about God or others.

Jesus says the key to proper “giving” is to do it in secret. Do it before God – your audience of ONE! God approves of giving that does it for Him alone – for His glory alone. God sees in secret and He will reward whatever is done in secret.

Father, Where Shall I Work Today?

Father, where shall I work today'
And my love flowed warm and free.
Then He pointed me out a tiny spot,
And said, “Tend that for me.”
I answered quickly, “Oh, no, not that.
Why, no one would ever see,
No matter how well my work was done.
Not that little place for me!”
And the word He spoke, it was not stern,
He answered me tenderly,
“Ah, little one, search that heart of thine;
Art thou working for them or me'
Nazareth was a little place,
And so was Galilee.”

author unknown (appropriately)

When we are working for God, we don't need the recognition of man! God sees. He sees what is done in secret for His glory! You see "secret giving" puts the focus on God because people are not involved. It ensures a God-centered focus!

The enduring reward that really matters comes from God! What really matters for all eternity is what God will say on Judgment Day. His is the only opinion that really matters or counts in the end.

God's keeping track of it all. People can be so fickle, but not God. Live for God. Give for God. Be totally God-focused in all your doing and giving. This is what counts.

Footnote:

"This passage should not be pressed to prohibit any gift that might be seen by others, since it is virtually impossible to make all one's contributions strictly anonymous. It simply condemns the blatant display of giving." –

William MacDonald

The spirit of it is that our giving is to be done for God's glory and not self-glory!

Also note the word "openly" is not found in the older manuscripts but as you consider the whole counsel of God His reward for faithful service is certainly going to be an openly known reality.

"It is said that there was a special, out-of-the-way place in the Temple where shy, humble Jews could leave their gifts without being noticed. Another place nearby was provided for the shy poor, who did not want to be seen asking for help. Here they would come and take what they needed. The name of the place was the Chamber of the Silent. People gave and people were helped, but no one knew the identities of either group." – ***John MacArthur***

But I would add: God KNEW! And the Father Who sees in secret will Himself reward each one.