

Bible Readings

Proverbs 19:17

Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done.

Matthew 6:1-4

Giving to the Needy

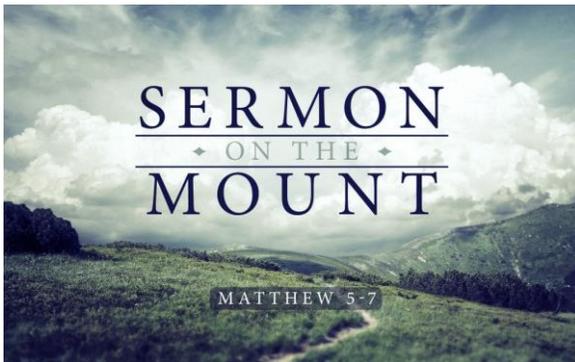
6 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 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. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Context/Recap

We are continuing our series on the **Sermon on the Mount** which we started before Easter - **Matthew chapters 5-7**

[PowerPoint 1-Sermon]



Just a recap - on chapter 5

[PowerPoint 2-Chapter 5 recap]

Sermon on the Mount

Chapter 5	Jesus' Teaching
The Beatitudes	The essential elements of Christian <i>character</i>
The metaphors of Salt and Light	A Christian's <i>influence</i> for good in the community
True righteousness	A <i>righteousness that exceeds</i> the Scribes and Pharisees

- Jesus **began** the **Sermon on the Mount** in Matthew **chapter 5** with the **beatitudes** - these were the essential elements of Christian **character**

- He then went on to **use two metaphors** - of **salt and light** - which describe a Christian's **influence** for good in the community - as Christians we are to **add salt (Christian flavour) to people's lives** - and we are to **shine the light (of Jesus) into people's lives** - so that they come out of the darkness of sin and into Jesus' light
- He then described Christian **righteousness** (righteousness means being right with God and approved by God) - and said that a **Christian must be more righteous than the religious people of Israel - the Scribes and Pharisees**
- His listeners would have thought - if the religious people aren't righteous enough - what chance have we got?
- So, Jesus, then in the **rest of chapter 5** - took six **Old Testament laws** - **Murder, Adultery, Divorce, Vows, Retaliation and Loving enemies** - and He **intensified the teaching** on these laws
- What Jesus was showing in His teaching was - it's not a **matter of externally keeping rules** - it's a **matter of what is in the heart** - that's true righteousness
- So, this morning as we hit **chapter 6**
- Jesus **continues His teaching** on righteousness
- And He gives a **general rule** on **righteousness** - **see v1**

General Rule when practicing our righteousness (Matthew 6:1)

Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

[PowerPoint 3-v1]

Sermon on the Mount

Chapter 6 – verse 1	Jesus' Teaching
The general rule when practicing our righteousness	<p>Beware of practicing your righteousness before others.</p> <p>Compare with Matthew 5:16</p> <p>Show our righteousness when tempted to hide it and hide our righteousness when tempted to show it.</p>

- Notice Jesus has shifted from the character of righteousness - things like kindness, purity, honesty and love - to the practice (or outworking) of righteousness - so in the first part of chapter 6 - He's going to look at giving to the needy, then prayer and fasting
- So, it's important for us to realize that **according to Jesus - Christian righteousness has two dimensions** - moral righteousness (being kind, pure, honest and loving) and outward righteousness - we could call it **religious activity** - whether that's what we do it public (like coming to church or helping the poor in the community) or what we do it private (like our prayers and devotions)
- **Jesus** then in v1 is tackling how we practice our righteousness in front of others

- He's warning against being seen by others when we practice our righteousness
- Now back in Matthew 5:16 - Jesus said: In the same way, let your light shine **before others**, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
- It seems like 6:1 and 5:16 contradict each other
- In 5:16 - Jesus says "*let your light shine before others*" and here in 6:1 he says "*be careful not to be seen by others*"
- How do we resolve this apparent contradiction?
- The clue lies in the fact that Jesus is speaking against different sins
- In 5:16 - He's warning against us being afraid or too timid to show we are Christians - so He says we must shine Jesus' light to others
- But in 6:1 - He's warning against us being vain and proud in our practice of righteousness - so He warns against being vain in front of others
- As one commentator (A.B. Bruce) puts it "*We must show our righteousness when tempted to hide it*" and "*we must hide our righteousness when tempted to show it*"
- The most important thing - in our giving - is to bring glory to God, the Father and not ourselves

Rules for Giving to the Needy (Matthew 6:2-4)

- Now that we have established that general rule when practicing our righteousness

1. N _ T _ _ _ _ _ _ (Matthew 6:2)

- We can now look at the rules for giving to the needy - in verses 2 to 4
- Looking at verse 2 then:

So, when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

[PowerPoint 4-v2]

Sermon on the Mount	
Chapter 6 – verse 2	Jesus' Teaching
Rule 1 on giving	So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets , as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.
No Trumpets!	

- Jesus is saying here - **generosity is not enough**
- **Our Lord is concerned** throughout the Sermon on the Mount with our motivation
- Remember how Jesus said - in chapter 5 - **it's possible for us to murder someone in our heart** - or to **commit adultery with someone in our heart** -
- Our heart has to be right when we give to the needy too
- The **question is not what the hand is doing** when giving to the needy
- But what the heart is thinking when the hand is doing

- There are **three possibilities**:
 - a. Either we are **seeking the praise of others**
 - b. Or we **give without anyone knowing** and at the same time we are **congratulating ourselves** on how good we are
 - c. Or we are **desiring only the approval of God**, the Father
- The **religious people of Jesus' time** had a ravenous hunger for praise from **people** - as Jesus says in John 12:45 - **they loved human praise more than praise from God**
- So, in verse 2 Jesus is attacking the "performance" that goes on when they give to the needy
- **Jesus gives a picture of them walking along the street - attracting a crowd - and announcing their giving with trumpets - so they get honoured and praised by everyone watching**
- As Spurgeon puts it "*To stand with a penny in one hand and a trumpet in the other is the posture of hypocrites*"
- That's the word Jesus uses - **he calls this kind of giving - as being what hypocrites do**
- In **Greek** the word for **hypocrite** - hypokrites - was used first for an orator and then an actor. So, what the word came to mean was to **describe someone who sees the world as a stage on which they played a part**.
- The person is no longer themselves but playing a part
- In the acting world - playing another part - is fine - it's all part of the **entertainment**

- But being a religious hypocrite - is **different** - because the **person plays the part** - to deceive others - because the religious hypocrite takes a religious practice like giving to the needy and **turns it into what it was never meant to be** - a theatrical display before an audience. It's **all done for applause**
- **Jesus says being like this means you get your reward there and then** from the people watching - **and no other reward, from God, will come your way**
- So, **rule number one** (in our outline) - when giving - **No Trumpets!**

2. D _ _ ' _ B _ S _ _ _ - C _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (Matthew 6:3)

- The 2nd rule is in verse 3

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

[PowerPoint 5-v3]

Sermon on the Mount

Chapter 6 – verse 3	Jesus' Teaching
Rule 2 on giving	But when you give to the needy, <i>do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,</i>
Don't be self-conscious	

- What does Jesus mean by not letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing?
- Normally the right hand is the active hand

- So, **Jesus assumes** as we **hand over our gift** to the needy with our right hand - our left hand is **not watching**
- What He means is we're **not only not** to tell other people about our **Christian giving** but there's a sense in which we are **not even** to tell ourselves
- In other words, we're not to be self-conscious in our giving
- Because self-consciousness will lead to self-righteousness
- We're not to keep a record of what we've given - oh I gave \$100 to PIM, and \$100 to Jericho Road - oh and last week I gave \$100 to a bloke in the street - and then there's all the stuff I brought in for the hampers
- If we start keeping records like that - we will gloat over it
- For example, I've no idea how many food hampers we have given to people in need - I know a record is kept each time one is given - but I don't think anyone here is going to go through - and count them
- **Christian giving** is to be marked by self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness - not by self-congratulation
- *Charles Spurgeon and his wife, apparently would sell, but refused to give away, the eggs their hens laid. Even close relatives were told, "You may have eggs if you pay for them." As a result, some people labelled the Spurgeons as greedy. They accepted the criticisms without defending themselves, and only after Mrs. Spurgeon died was the full story revealed. All the profits from the sale of eggs went to support two elderly widows.*

Because the Spurgeons where unwilling to let their left hand know what the right hand was doing (Matthew 6:3), they endured the attacks in silence.

- So, **rule number two** (in our outline) is don't be self-conscious in our giving

3. I _ S _ _ _ _ _ (Matthew 6:4 and Proverbs 19:17)

- The third rule is in verse 4

so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

[PowerPoint 6-v4]

Sermon on the Mount

Chapter 6 – verse 4	Jesus' Teaching
Rule 3 on giving	so that your giving <i>may be in secret</i> . Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.
In Secret	

- So, we've seen that **Jesus warns against getting praise from others because of our giving** and we **should avoid congratulations from ourselves too**
- Now Jesus says - **the only witness to our giving that matters is God the Father**
- We should be satisfied that **the only witness to our giving is God Himself**
- Therefore, **Jesus says** our giving should be in secret

- Jesus says when we give in secret - our **Heavenly Father** **sees** what we have done - and rewards us
- **We have to be careful** what Jesus means by reward - here
- Because we could be motivated to give to the needy so we get a reward and that would not be giving for the right reason
- Our OT reading from Proverbs 19:17 also says that when we give to the needy - it's like lending to the Lord - and we will receive a reward
- The reward from the Heavenly Father is not a public one that everyone can see as that would be contrary to Jesus' teaching here on getting praise from others
- Nor is the reward we get - some reward at a future date
- No, the reward Jesus is referring to is the reward we get in our hearts
 - **When we see the hungry fed or the naked clothed or the sick healed or the oppressed freed or the lost saved - then the love that prompted our giving is satisfied - it brings secret joy in our hearts**
 - To back this up Jesus taught in Matthew 25:40 - Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me - It's the joy we feel inside knowing the giving we gave was for Jesus - whom we love - because He loved us and died for us
 - And don't forget - Jesus also said "It is more blessed to give than to receive" - because there's real joy in the act of giving (Acts 20:35)
- So, rule number three (in our outline) is our giving should be done in secret

Applications

To sum up then - in our **Christian giving** there are to be **no trumpets announcing our gift**; we're **not to be self-conscious** in what we give - and we are to give in secret

To finish up then

3 applications for us to think about this morning

[PowerPoint 7-Applications]

Giving – Applications

- 1. *What's our motivation for giving?***
- 2. *Is our giving to others in secret?***
- 3. *Are we holding back in our giving?***

1. What's our motivation for giving? Is it a **genuine desire to help the needy** and a genuine desire to glorify God? Or are we **showing off** when we help others? - or so we **get praise from others? Or are we simply giving to please God?**
2. Is our giving to others in secret? Why does anyone need to know what we're giving - except God? Even the **recipient doesn't need to know where the gift came from** unless it's practically not possible

3. Examine our giving in general - are we holding back? Is there a need that we are ignoring but which we could actually help with? Jesus didn't hold back on the cross, He was sacrificial - He gave His all for us.

As Mother Theresa puts it "If you give what you don't need - that isn't giving"

In the earlier church (Acts 4) - their giving to the needy was sacrificial -

We'll finish with that:

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Let's pray...