



Matthew: The King and His Kingdom

Series: The Manifesto of the King, Part 18: Grace Driven Giving

Matthew 6:1-4

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As we looked at these words from Jesus last week, we were brought face-to-face with one of the great challenges to us as followers of Christ and that is to live and to act with the right motive of the heart, to avoid spiritual hypocrisy. Now that was a new term, a new concept for some of you last week so I want to define that for you again.

Most of us are familiar with concept of hypocrisy as saying one thing and then doing another, proclaiming moral standards or beliefs that your own life does not conform to. But here in this text, through the examples that he uses, Jesus redefines spiritual hypocrisy in an entirely different manner. He says spiritual hypocrisy consists in using religious acts, or righteous acts, as a way to gain glory for you and steal glory from God. The way that Jesus uses the word hypocrite means to do spiritual things, to use spiritual things – in this text giving, praying, and fasting – as a means to gain glory and recognition and honor for yourself, and from a heart of gratitude to God for His grace and mercy given in Christ our Lord.

Jesus warns us to beware of such spiritual hypocrisy because it is a particularly subtle, destructive and dangerous foe. It is dangerous because it is so easily hidden. As we saw last week -- **hypocrisy, being a sin of the heart, can easily go undetected.** It can hide and it can camouflage itself and the only way it can be detected is by the Spirit of God applying the Word of God to our hearts (**Hebrews 4:12, ESV**).

The second reason that spiritual hypocrisy is so dangerous is because it **pursues the right things.** It doesn't pursue obvious sin and rebellion against God. Jesus uses giving to the needy, prayer, and fasting as His examples. He could have used worship attendance,

singing, Scripture reading, teaching, or tithing as an example. This issue is not the action. The issue is the motive behind it.

Last, **spiritual hypocrisy receives the praise of men.** It gains the approval and the esteem of men. From the human perspective, the spiritual hypocrite is a wonderful human being, yet all the while they are filled with selfish ambition, self-exaltation, pride and self-congratulation. Hypocrisy leads to the self-glorification that our fallen human nature, our old man, our sinful flesh desires. Hypocrisy is deadly foe and for that reason we need these strong warnings from Jesus regarding its wickedness and we need to have Him expose the ways in which hypocrisy can manifest itself in our lives. We looked at that last week, and now as we begin to work our way through the examples that Christ used – giving, praying, and fasting – we are going to seek to understand the right motive from which to practice all of these things and by extension, all of the acts of righteousness that we engage in as the people of God. So look again with me at these first four verses:

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:1–4, ESV) What is Jesus saying to us? In what manner and from what motive are disciples to give to meet and alleviate physical needs? First I think that as we consider these words from Christ, particularly as we live on this side of the cross and resurrection, we need to see that

1) The foundation for giving to meet physical needs is found in God’s giving to alleviate your spiritual need. I think this is ***the over-arching thing*** we need to remember as we consider giving – it is all grace driven. It all finds its root in God’s giving to us. I say that based upon the counsel of Paul that he gave to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 8. Let me show you what I mean. In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to give generously for the physical needs of the church in Jerusalem. In doing so, he uses the Macedonians as an example. Listen to these words: **(2 Corinthians 8:1–9, ESV)**

There are two things that stand out in this text that I want for us to see. First, I want you to look here at verse 9. The giving of the Macedonians was joyful and generous and voluntary and it was rooted in the grace of God showered upon them in Christ. Do you see? When encouraging them to give to the needy, Paul roots his appeal in their experiential knowledge, their experience of God's grace to deliver them through the grace that is in Jesus Christ. He speaks of how Christ made himself poor so that we could be made rich. That is the root of all biblical giving for all of us. We have received incalculable riches in Christ. We have been redeemed from the dung heap of sin, rescued from the wrath of God that our sins richly deserved. His priceless blood has paid our debt to God; our guilt washed away in its crimson flow. We have become acceptable to God in Him, given a righteousness by which we stand before the face of Holy God fully accepted as His sons and daughters. We who were spiritual paupers have received grace upon grace, spiritual riches upon spiritual riches from God in Christ. We have been the glad recipients of an unmerited kindness and goodness to us stemming from Christ's pure and free covenant love to us. The greatest example of sacrificial giving, the giving from which all who are truly Christians have eternally benefited, is the willing sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf, His giving of Himself to deliver us from death into eternal life, by His willingness to make Himself poor so that we could become rich. That must be the motive, the root reason for any giving to alleviate need. I was undeserving and Christ gave to me grace untold, so now I freely give.

Then, second, look at the end of verse 5 and you can see the way in which they gave. Paul means for us to see that giving must proceed from worship, from giving oneself to God first and then to meet the needs of others. The supreme act of worship is not giving money or attending church or even singing praise – the supreme act of worship is giving ourselves to God. In Romans 12, we read these words: **(Romans 12:1, ESV)** It is only giving, presenting ourselves to God, that any kind of charitable giving finds its worth and value. Having given themselves first to God, then the Macedonians gave themselves to Paul and to the needs of the Jerusalem church.

So the foundational thing that we must remember as we consider grace giving is first, that it is rooted in Christ's giving of Himself for our sake and second, that it must proceed from a life that is consecrated to God, through Christ the result of that mercy and grace received. OK? So let's look at what Jesus says here.

Like we saw last week, Jesus makes fun of the Pharisees and their tendency to magnify themselves and their giving so they would be seen and applauded as holy men for giving to the poor. (**Matthew 6:1–2, ESV**) Jesus calls out the Pharisees and their spiritual hypocrisy and speaks to the very real temptation to draw attention to our giving in order to be praised by men. Then He says: **“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,”** (**Matthew 6:3, ESV**) What is Jesus saying here? First we need to see that Jesus expects that giving the poor and caring for the poor will be a part of our lives as His disciples. He expects that very clearly. Jesus’ point here is simply this:

2) Do not give to the needy as a source of self-commendation. This is what Jesus means when He says **“do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”** He does mean that we are to give indiscriminately or foolishly or willy-nilly. I have heard people use that as an excuse to give for some of the most foolish things. When we give to the needy to their own hurt and steal any motivation for growth or responsibility or when we give to someone who is not truly needy, that is not wise or beneficial to their spiritual well-being. That is not what Jesus is talking about. He is talking about giving to the truly needy. Deuteronomy 15 talks about this in detail: (**Deuteronomy 15:7–11, ESV**) The godly practice of helping the truly poor and helpless is not supposed to be an occasion for self-promotion and exaltation but instead an expression of gratitude toward God for all that He has given. It is to be an extension of his abundant mercy and kindness.

The phrase, **“do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”** is a Hebraic expression. In Jesus’ culture, the right hand was the action hand. It was the hand that would be used to give the gift. When he says that the left hand is not to know what the right hand is doing, he is saying, not only are we not to trumpet our giving before other people, there is a sense in which we are not even to tell ourselves. We are not to be self-congratulatory in our giving. As soon as the giving of a gift is done, we are to forget it. We are not to keep recalling it in order to glory over it, or to take pride in how generous, or sacrificial, or gracious we have been.

Do you remember when Jesus said to His disciples: (**Matthew 25:31–40, ESV**) Do you see the self-forgetfulness there? They acted in mercy, they did the things Christ talked about, but they didn’t exalt themselves for it, it was not a source of self-applause. It is the kind of forgetfulness we all need to have.

Christian giving is to be marked by self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, not by self-congratulation. And why is that? Because self-congratulation leads to self-righteousness. Jesus wants us to guard our hearts from turning an act of mercy into an act of vanity. Don't praise yourself for your giving. Deny your flesh any temptation to pat yourself on the back because you are such a generous giver.

That is why Jesus says in the beginning of verse 4: **“so that your giving may be in secret.” (Matthew 6:4, ESV)** Not only should we not give as a source of self-commendation, but we should not give to seek the commendation of others.

3) Do not give to seek the commendation of others. Let our giving be in secret, known only to us and to God. Self-centeredness and living for the sake of our own glory belongs to the old life; the new life in Christ is to be one of gracious generosity. What we should be seeking to do in giving to the need is giving to the needy as an act of worship before the face of God and desiring to meet with His approval and good pleasure. We give to please God. We should be satisfied with having God alone as our only witness. If there is any credit to be received, it is God alone who should receive it because ultimately it is He who gives to His people so that they can give to the poor.

4) What is the reward we seek? Jesus tells us. He says: **“Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:4b, ESV)** The ultimate reward, of course, is the reward of true righteousness, which is heaven. It is the approval of the Father and His words spoken over us” “Well done, good and faithful slave, enter into the joy of your Master.”

John Stott describes the present reward of God in this way. He says: **What then is the reward which the heavenly Father gives the secret giver? It is (not) public... It is probably the only reward which genuine love wants when making a gift to the needy, namely to see the need relieved. When through His gifts, the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the sick healed, the oppressed freed, and the lost saved, the love which prompted the gift is satisfied. Such love which is God's own love expressed through man brings with it its own secret joys and desires no other reward. To sum up, our Christian giving is neither to be before men, waiting for the clapping to begin. Nor, even before ourselves, with our left**

hand applauding our right. But before God, who sees our secret heart and rewards us with the discovery that as Jesus said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

5) Points of Application

The call to help those in need is real and necessary. Pursue opportunities to bless those who are truly in need and seek opportunities to help them to become self-sufficient. I cannot demand of you specific ways in which you need to help people or the people whom you need to help. I cannot tell you how much to give. Now I know that there are many excuses not to help those in need. The thinking may be that the poor are just lazy and should work harder, or that it is the government's responsibility to help them, or that it is a never ending task and so it won't do much good anyway or whatever. There are many reasons people can come up with to avoid merciful giving. What I can say to you is what James says (**James 1:27; 2:14–17, ESV**). James is emphasizing not only money, but acts of mercy – we are called to this as God's people.

We engage in benevolence ministry as a church, we give to the Persecuted church and have a food pantry here. Those things are expressions of ways in which we can help the poor. You can give to those things. You can as well serve those whom God puts before you. It may not be the same for all of us and that is just fine but we should engage opportunities to help the needy as an expression of worship and our thankfulness is important that we be wise and discerning regarding who we help and how much we help them? Yes. Even Scripture gives direction regarding the enrolling of widows in 1 Timothy 5. Nor, for example, can we use giving to the needy as an excuse for ignoring our tithe or failing to provide for our family. However, we cannot allow discernment to be an excuse for inaction. . There must be a Spirit-directed balance in our giving.

Giving to the needy has a much greater aim in view than the alleviating of human suffering.

While giving to the needy and acts of mercy relieve human suffering, there is a greater purpose that the Christian keeps in mind. We desire to help others but more than anything, we offer our gifts, we do our acts of mercy with a sense of gratitude for the great mercy that the Lord has shown us. We keep the Lord ever before our minds as we make our gifts. It is with a view toward pleasing Him that the Christian gives. It is out of a worshipful heart. It is from the desire that he be acknowledged by the one whom we help and that he receive the glory that He is worthy to receive

The giving that brings glory to God is the giving that is rooted in the glory of God's grace in Christ and leads to the gospel. Bill Gates is a fine humanitarian. The Bill and Melinda Gates

foundation gives massive amounts of money to deal with extreme poverty and poor health in developing countries, to provide vaccines, farming innovations etc. From a human perspective, those things are praiseworthy things. But they are not acts of worship and they do not bring glory to God simply because they are not rooted in the glory of God's grace to us in Christ. Bill Gates is an atheist. Bill Gates has his reward and robs God of His glory. True grace giving which brings God glory and magnifies Him and exalts Him begins with true grace received. It begins with a life and soul transformed by the grace of God given to us in Christ and it leads to the gospel.

Live in such a way that we receive God's reward. If you settle for man's praise rather than God's, you are fooling and cheating yourself. I encourage you today to seek the true reward—the highest possible reward—of seeing God face to face. Proverbs 19:17 says: ***“Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.”*** (Proverbs 19:17, ESV)

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