

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

### *A Christian's Religion*

#### I. Review: Christ and the Law

- A. Jesus describes the Spirit-given character of a Kingdom member (Matt 5:1-12)
- B. Despite expected persecution from the world (Matt 5:12), the Christian makes an impact (Matt 5:13-16)
- C. Jesus is the fulfillment of the entire OT (Matt 5:17) and consummates all that the OT foreshadows (Matt 5:18)
- D. Because Jesus upholds the OT, we should apply the OT to our lives better than the Pharisees (Matt 5:20)!
- E. Jesus contrasts His explanation of the OT Law with the distortions/misapplications of the Pharisees (Matt 5:21-48), primarily because of God's unmerited grace toward us while we were sinners.

Q. What might be the listener's temptation at this point, given Jesus' command to "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48)?

#### II. A Christian's External Righteousness

*"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.*

<sup>2</sup> *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.* <sup>3</sup> *But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,* <sup>4</sup> *so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

<sup>5</sup> *And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.* <sup>6</sup> *But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

<sup>7</sup> *And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.* <sup>8</sup> *Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."* (Matt 6:1-8)

*"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."* <sup>17</sup> *But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,* <sup>18</sup> *that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* (Matt 6:16-18)

1. Why doesn't Matt 6:1 contradict Matt 5:16 ("...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven")?
2. What is the motive at work in the first illustration? Why is this form of hypocrisy so subtly destructive?

Types of Hypocrisy<sup>1</sup>:

- (a) One that feigns goodness but is actually evil (Matt 22:15)

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<sup>1</sup> From D.A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*, 61.

- (b) One that is puffed up with self-righteousness, but others see his faults easily
- (c) One that believes one is sincerely good, and others praise him for good deeds.

3. What is Jesus' response for them (Matt 6:2)? What are some modern examples? What is Jesus' remedy?

*"[Christians'] ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ...as they are good, they proceed from his Spirit; and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment."* (WCF 16.3, 16.5)

*Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unreprouvable in God's sight; but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.* (WCF 16.6)

4. Describe the second illustration. What is the motive at work? What is Jesus' remedy?

5. Do you pray more frequently and more fervently when you are alone than in public? Do you scramble to find phrases that will please your fellow listeners? Is your public praying an overflow of your private praying? Do you love the time of secret prayer?

*"In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God."* (Luke 6:12)

6. Describe the third illustration. On what occasions is fasting appropriate? What are modern examples analogous to the Pharisee's hypocrisy?

7. Why is hypocrisy a particular danger for those zealous for holiness (Pharisee = 'separated one')? How did the Pharisee's view God?

*"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.'" (Luke 15:28-29)*

*"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in."* (Matt 23:13)

8. How is the Fatherhood of God a remedy for hypocrisy in the eyes of men? Do you view God as a slave-master or as your heavenly Father? What do you seek after the most, a reward from men or a reward from God?

*"Those bound by the yoke of the law are like servants assigned certain tasks for each day by their masters. These servants think they have accomplished nothing, and dare not appear before their masters unless they have*

*fulfilled the exact measure of their tasks. But sons, who are more generously and candidly treated by their fathers, do not hesitate to offer them incomplete and half-done and even defective works, trusting that their obedience and readiness of mind will be accepted by their fathers, even though they have not achieved what their fathers intended. Such children ought we to be, firmly trusting that our services will be approved by our most merciful Father, however small, rude, and imperfect these may be. Thus also he assured us through the prophet: "I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him" (Mal 3:17)." – Calvin, (Institutes, 3.19.5)*