**Renovating My Motives**

8/18/13

Matthew 6:1-18

For the previous 3 weeks, Pastor John has done an awesome job of sharing with us the wonderful message of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. We’ve gone through the Beatitudes and seen the very heart of our Savior and His desire for our lives. Today, we advance to chapter 6 and we will be challenged by Jesus to look at our motives. In this chapter, Jesus is challenging our genuineness. He warns us about what our real motives are. Do we do things out of a real love for God and His glory or do we do things for our own glory and self-glorification? In other words, do we do the right things for the right reasons? Chapter 6 is a further expansion on the thought of 5:20, which showed how the Pharisees’ righteousness was sorely lacking. In Chapter 6, Jesus exposes their hypocrisy in the matters of “good deeds” (vv. 1-4), “prayer” (vv. 5-15) and “fasting” (vv. 16-18) All of these righteous acts that the Pharisees were engaged in were supposed to be worship rendered to God, never displays of self-righteousness to gain the admiration of others. A little side note and personal opinion- self righteousness is a huge turn off to those not in the church. People on the outside of the church are craving to see church people who are real and genuine, people who don’t puff themselves up, but rather display their faith humbly and sacrificially. They need us to be real, willing to help and serve without any earthly reward. People can spot a phony a mile away. I am convinced that **it is this type of example that will win the lost to Christ.**

**Matthew 5:20 *“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”***

**Our practice of religion should be genuine.**

**Piety is the quality of being reverent.**

**Piety is the quality of being dutiful.**

**One large element of piety should be humility.**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ expounds the full meaning of the law. In other words, most in His audience, that were gathered on that hillside along the banks of the Sea of Galilee, were probably convinced they knew and were following the law. But Jesus goes to a much deeper understanding of the law, **which shows that its demands are humanly impossible.** His teachings are just as radical today as they were 2000 years ago.

You see, even us as believers in Christ, we like to think that we do the right things for the right reasons; we like to think that we follow the rules if you will, but even we fall short of truly understanding the meaning and following of God’s standards. Imagine, being a devout Jew and being under the assumption that you were truly living according to God’s standards and then this Rabbi from Nazareth appears and begins preaching this deeper explanation of what God really meant with His law. You’d have one of two choices. You could either get on board, accept this message and repent of your sins or reject this Rabbi as a troublemaker. 2000 years later, the choice remains the same.

Jesus’ proper explanation of the law with respect to salvation closes off every possible avenue of human merit and leaves us sinners dependent on nothing else but His grace for salvation. Christ reveals the depth of the law, showing that its true demands go far beyond the surface meaning of the words and set a standard that even the most diligent students of the law have realized.

**DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR THE RIGHT REASONS**

Have you ever been around folks who will do good things, but they want to make sure others know ***they*** did it? It’s this **LOOK AT ME** attitude. For some of us it’s all about looking good. Today’s social media culture of Facebook, Instagram and whatever else is out there can certainly feed our appetite for attention. I love Facebook for staying connecting with friends, but do you ever wonder why some things on FB are posted?

If we’re honest with ourselves, we probably all like to be recognized and appreciated for our good deeds. I’m not talking about a pat on the back type of encouragement. I’m talking about an unhealthy desire for having others see us when we doing something good. *“If so and so sees me doing something good, then they will really think I’m something!”*

I have two cousins who attended a certain University of the Magnolia State about 90 miles south of here. This university will have to remain nameless, because I don’t want upset Jim or have him pull the plug on this sermon. Well, I read a few years ago, that a tavern frequented by students of this school ran the following ad in the campus paper during the days before Parents Weekend: “Bring your parents for Lunch Saturday. We’ll pretend we ***don’t*** know you!” Well, seeing an opportunity, the college chaplain posted his own ad on the campus bulletin board. It read: “Bring your parents to Chapel Sunday. We’ll Pretend We ***Know*** You!”

We have also seen some people who will do some nice things, but they want to make sure others see it. It is like the athlete or celebrity who goes to visit sick children in the hospital with a camera crew in tow. We’ve seen others who do things and they ***do not*** seek recognition for what they do. Speaking of athletes, there are so many who do so much like visiting children in hospitals and never seek fanfare for it. For instance, the quarterback for our local University, which will **not** remain nameless, the University of Memphis Tigers, has made a routine during his time at Memphis of visiting patients at St Jude. Without the knowledge of his coaches or teammates, he shows up every month at the cafeteria area of Target House. Some days he’ll play a kid’s favorite song on the piano. Some days he sits alone, playing background music while families eat, or he’ll do arts and crafts with kids. One time he helped move boxes. Whatever they need, he does.

When he showed up on a Monday night in July, the staff at Target House didn’t point him to any boxes. They pointed him to a little 11 year girl battling cancer, named Breanna. What happened next is nothing short of amazing. For those wondering, Karam is so talented that he learned to play Jessie J’s “Price Tag” simply by listening to Breanna sing it. All the while this was taking place, Breanna’s mother was recording the moment on her smartphone and then shortly thereafter posted it on Facebook. It went viral. The story was featured on ESPN and is all over the internet on different sports websites. My son and I were recently driving to Arkansas to play golf, when we heard Karam being interviewed about the video. His attitude about serving and loving the sick was very genuine and while he didn’t prevent the mother from making the video, he didn’t think she would post it and it would go viral. He went out of his way in the interview to let the audience know that the video wasn’t his idea.

I ask you, which person would you respect more?

**In life, people are looking for something real to hold on to. People are looking for people who are genuine to look up to and follow.**

God is the same way. God is looking for people who are truly committed to Him, not people who do things “FOR” God to be recognized for it while their hearts are not with God. **Are actions alone enough or is the heart behind the actions important?**

Today we are going to look at a new section of the Sermon on the Mount. This section will deal with three important **duties** we are called to do along with the **kind of heart** we are to have when performing them.

Turn with me and lets begin our study of Matthew 6:1-18.

From the first verse, we see a **WARNING TO HEED**.

**Matthew 6:1 *“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.”***

**Do I crave attention and recognition?**

The landscape hasn’t changed much over 2000 years. During Jesus’ day many people were going through the motions of religion so that they would receive accolades from other people.

Jesus tells us to “beware” or “be on guard against” the heart and motivation that He is going to speak of. Jesus is warning us about the attitude and motivation by which we do things for God.

The use of the term “righteousness” clearly indicates that what follows in the verse is still connected to the theme of “greater righteousness” in 5:20. In this context “acts of righteousness” are defined as religious acts motivated by one’s devotion and relationship with God. Jesus wants his followers to be truly God-centered in their performance, not oriented toward self-glorification.

Notice the words, “**to be noticed**”. The word for (to be noticed) is related to the term from which we get **theater**. It has in mind **a spectacle to be gazed at.** In other words, Jesus is warning about practicing a form of righteousness (acts of religious devotion) whose purpose is to show off before men.

Such religion is like a play; it is not real, it’s acting. It does not demonstrate what is in the minds and hearts of the actors, but is simply a performance designed to make a certain impression on those who are watching. Jesus tells us that if we do things to receive attention from people, then we have received our reward.

**Jesus does not want our good works hidden. He is warning us about our motivation for good works.**

Jesus tells us in **Matthew 5:16, *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”***

It’s important to note that Jesus isn’t forbidding the public acts of righteousness. We are not to do them with the intention of receiving the glory. Jesus tells us that the “Look at Me” way is not what God is looking for. That is not to be our intent at all!

**EXAMPLES TO AVOID**

As we look at the examples to avoid you will see a common word in all three instances, the word **hypocrite**. Jesus used many figures to describe hypocrisy. In Luke 12:1, he compared it to leaven. In Matthew 23:27 to whitewashed tombs, In Luke 11:44 to concealed tombs, In Matthew 13:25 to tares amidst the wheat and in Matthew 7:15 to wolves in sheep’s clothing.

**A hypocrite was an actor in a play.** A hypocrite is one who plays something they are not. Jesus is telling us in all three instances how to avoid becoming a person who plays something they are not. We must keep our guard up so that we can remain genuine, so that we keep up not only the right actions, but the right attitudes and motives too!

As we look at these examples, we need to note that Jesus is in no way condemning acts of righteousness.

Let’s look at verse two for the first of three areas where a bad example is shared.

**A BAD EXAMPLE OF GIVING**

**Matthew 6:2 *“When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward in full.”***

This is a horrible example of giving. Notice that Jesus doesn’t say if you give, but **when** you give. Jesus expects us to take care of the needy. Older translations use the word “alms”. Alms were deeds of kindness or acts of mercy that were directed at the poor. Jesus says the hypocrite will give to the poor, but they will do it in such a way that people will notice them and praise them for their generosity. Jesus says that when we give in that manner that we are not pleasing God, and that the applause from man is the only reward we will receive. The hypocrites gave vast amounts of money to people and they made sure it was done in such a manner that it was known.

Sometimes, we do the same thing today in the church. I’ve seen instances where churches feel compelled to offer ways to recognize their givers for their giving. Have you ever been in a church with a stained glass window, a pew or even a gymnasium paid for by so and so, which is revealed to you by a plaque or nameplate. If we are giving so that people will **know** that we gave, we’d be better off keeping our money as far as God is concerned. The attitude Jesus speaks of is of one **SEEKING** recognition for giving.

My bible professor, Dr. Ron Moseley of the American Institute of Holy Land Studies, teaches a different thought than most bible scholars of what “do not sound a trumpet” in verse 2 means. We typically think of the blowing of a trumpet as in the playing of the musical instrument. Well, my professor says there is evidence to support that it actually means something else. You see, at the temple courts, there were containers shaped like trumpets that people put their monetary gifts in. When one would give there with coins, and do it with enough gusto, the coins would rattle and clang as they went down to the bottom of the vessel. In that day, coins were made of copper, silver and gold and each type made a distinct sound as they were deposited into the container, so if you were giving gold those around would know even without seeing you drop the gold coin.

**A BAD EXAMPLE OF PRAYER**

**Matthew 6:5 *“And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward in full.”***

Notice again, Jesus says **when** you pray. Prayer was a very important part of the day for the people of Jesus’ day as it should be in our day.

The Jews had set times of prayer to where they would drop what they were doing to offer up prayers to God. Jesus says that they hypocrites will make sure that during prayer time they position themselves to be in a place where they will be seen praying. Some folks would make sure they were in a busy area during these prayer times so that people would see them lift their hands toward heaven and marvel at their piety. When I visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem, I sensed that some of the prayers being offered were being done in this negative sense Jesus is referring to. Once again, Jesus says they have received their reward in full.

Jesus is not prohibiting public prayer, but He is **saying that prayer is not a show!**

Prayer is about attitude and motives. How is our attitude during prayer? When we pray, are we trying to impress people or are we genuinely speaking to God?

**A BAD EXAMPLE OF FASTING**

**Matthew 6:16 *“And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”***

Fasting was a very common form of worship in Jesus’ day. It is an act of religious devotion that was highly valued.

In fasting, Jesus tells us that we are not to be noticed for doing it. The popular practice of the day was for people who ***wanted*** to be noticed to go unshaven. Some would even put ashes on themselves and even in their eyes to disfigure their faces so that people would see them. When we fast, are we telling people we are trying to impress them with our sacrifice or are we doing it in an effort to better focus on God?

The hypocrite WANTS everyone to know they are fasting. The overall attitude to avoid is that of WANTING to be recognized for what we do. Sometimes people will notice us for what we do, such as in Jacob Karam’s situation, but it is important that recognition by man is **not** our MOTIVE for service. In fact, the recognition should embarrass us. When we are recognized, we need to make sure that we give glory to God!

**INSTRUCTIONS TO EMBRACE**

The Right Actions coupled with a Right Heart!

**GIVING**

**Matthew 6:3-4 *“But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”***

In verse 3 we are told to give in such a manner that it is not a public display. We are to give because we love Jesus and want to do what He wants us to do. Our attitude should be one of humility. We are humbled by the fact that God has blessed us in such a manner that we can help other people. When we give with this attitude, God will reward it!

Remember what my professor taught about the sounding of the trumpets. Well, Jewish tradition said that there was in the temple a “chamber of secrets” into which the devout used to put their gifts in secret so that the poor could receive support in secret from that place. The hypocrites didn’t use this chamber because no one could see them in that place.

**PRAYER**

**Matthew 6:6-7 *“But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in heaven and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.”***

Proper instruction for prayer-

We are told to go into our prayer closet and pray. Most of the Jewish homes had a place where a person could go to pray without attracting attention to themselves. We pray to Jesus because we love Him and want to speak with Him. Getting in a quiet place allows us to get the cares of the world out of our minds so that we can really focus on God.

Verse 7 teaches us that our prayers:

* Aren’t to be merely recited
* Words aren’t to be repeated thoughtlessly
* Aren’t automatic formulas

The bottom line is that prayer is not to be a show; it is a sacred communication between you and God!

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

**A model for our prayers. It takes the focus off of us!**

It begins with adoration for God.

It acknowledges we are subjected to His will.

It asks petitions of Him for our daily needs and spiritual needs.

**FASTING**

**Matthew 6:17-18 *“But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who is in secret will repay you.”***

Verse 17 tells us that WHEN we fast, we are to go about our normal business. We are often tempted to tell people when we are going through something special. However, fasting should be between you and god. Fasting is designed for you to focus in on God, not to be noticed by men. We are to focus on God, not being hungry, not letting others “know” we are fasting.

The overall attitude that Jesus tells us to have is one of humility. We are to be humble enough to not need the recognition of man when we do things for Jesus.

**CONCLUSION**

When Jesus spoke of the Pharisees in Mark 7:6 He said:

**Mark 7:6 *“And He said to them, ‘Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “’This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me.”***

As we grow in Christ, it is important for us to realize that not only are our actions important but also the motives and attitudes behind the actions. There will be times that as we serve the Lord that people will see that and try to give us praise for it. One of the ways Satan traps us is by getting us to make sure that we do things to be noticed. If all you are looking for is recognition and praise from man, then you have received your reward no matter what you gave. We always need to make sure that we are doing what we are doing for the right reason and the right reason is to bring glory to Jesus.