



Part 37: Jesus and Motive

Matthew 6:1-4

Jesus teaches us to embody our faithfulness as an expression of love to our Lord rather than to be noticed by people.

I. Look Below the Surface

We are at a place in the Sermon where Jesus warns us about our motives. In Matthew 5 Jesus taught us how to live = the “what” of living as his disciples in the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 6: 1-18, Jesus is teaching us why we live the way we do.

II. Embodied Faithfulness

“Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 6:1

Jesus speaks of “acts of righteousness” meaning the specific ways we embody our faithfulness to the Lord (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16).

Review of “Righteousness” ... We have encountered this word twice already in the Sermon, and it’s the key to understanding the Sermon.

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”
Matthew 5:6*

“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:20

A. Kingdom Righteousness: Gift & Goal (5:20)

“...relationship is what righteousness is all about...righteousness is all about living in faithfulness to the terms of the relationship.” – Darrell Johnson

Kingdom righteousness is both the gift and goal of our relational life of love with God in His Kingdom.

“...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 6:48

Kingdom righteousness is both the gift of relationship with God through King Jesus, and it is the way we are to embody our faithfulness to the Lord (the “obedience of faith” – Romans 1:5).

B. Wrong Motives

“Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. 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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”
Matthew 6:1-2

Jesus is referring to the religious leaders and others, who do their good deeds, to be noticed by others. He uses the word “hypocrites” to describe these people. Greek *hypokritai* = actors in the theatre, who put on masks to play various roles.

“Desire for religious respect or reputation will immediately drag us into the rightness of scribes and Pharisees because that desire always focuses entirely upon the visible action, not the source of action in the heart.” – Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy

As we saw in the sermon on Matthew 5:20, the religious leaders misrepresented the nature of relationship with God. They viewed it more as a contractual relationship of employment rather than a covenant of love. Think job employment vs. marriage covenant.

C. Right Motives

“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. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:3-4

Jesus is using a figurative language to express the need for total secrecy. Our motive should simply be to express the compassion and generosity of our heavenly Father (same motive for loving our enemies).

“The theatre of God is in the hidden corners.” – John Calvin

Jesus is obviously not forbidding public acts of faithfulness such as corporate worship or serving together. Rather, he is warning us against doing our public deeds as a way of gaining public approval (contrast Matthew 5:16).

“But it is important that believers know that their heavenly Father notices what they do, and notices not merely in a deistic way, like a distant grandfather, but in a personal way, as a living Father. Disciples should know their sacrifices are worth it, that their bucking public opinion and visibility gets a reward somewhere. Human beings are made in the image of God to be noticed and to want to be noticed by God. Jesus, unlike Buddha, does not give techniques for eliminating this *tanha*, this passion, to be noticed; he redirects it.” – Dale Bruner

Spiritual discipline: practice secrecy.

III. Invitation to Love

Jesus promises us the notice of our heavenly Father. Two observations as we conclude:

1. “Heaven” is another spiritual dimension in which we are now connected to our heavenly Father through Jesus. The lord is as close as your breath.
2. Our salvation is more relational than transactional. Through Jesus you are invited into a relationship of love with him and his Father in heaven.

Discussion Questions:

1. What has been your experience hearing this Scripture taught?
2. Did you hear anything new or helpful in this sermon?
3. What questions does this raise for you?
4. How do you relate Matthew 5:13-16 and Matthew 6:1-4?
5. What do you think about the practice of secrecy?