

The Wisdom of Jesus

Be Real

Matthew 6:1-18

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We have been in the Sermon on the Mount for the last several weeks and continue in that study this morning. We are looking for the wisdom of Jesus. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom and we are to grow in the likeness of Jesus. So, here we are, looking to grow as Jesus did, in wisdom.

Our text of study this morning is familiar in that it contains the LORD's Prayer. But today, I want to look at the larger context and call your attention to the reason that Jesus gave these words in the first place.

Text: ¹ "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³ But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

⁵ "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

⁸ "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

¹⁴ "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

¹⁶ "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

¹⁷But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Introduction: In our continuing journey through the Sermon on the Mount, we have observed (1) The Kind of Life God Wants Us to Have (Happy; Blessed) and (2) The Kind of Person He Wants us to Become (Salt, Light, even Perfect). We now turn our attention to the third major section of the Sermon. We want to observe **How to Get the Most out of the Kingdom of God**. First, God demands and desires that we **Be Real**. Most will say that the number one reason that they do not go to church is hypocrisy. Chuck Colson commented, “The message is clear. The world isn’t looking at our tracts and rallies and telecasts and study manuals. [They are] looking at us and how we behave.”

You will notice, I think, that in this passage, Jesus begins with a rather general statement about the relationship between what the NJKV calls “charitable deeds” and reward. (The NIV says “acts of righteousness” and the NAS says just “righteousness.”) These are good translations of the original word. The connotation is all of our spiritual activity.

Then, Jesus illustrated this general principle with the giving of three very specific examples: giving, praying, and fasting. I want you to understand that the sense of the text is that Jesus is giving examples, but these are not the only three areas that we consider the relationship between the activity and our reward. The truth is that whatever spiritual activity we consider, we must be honest about the authenticity and the integrity of that activity. For us, it is giving, praying, and fasting, but so much more. The same spirit of devotion must be evident in all of our spiritual activity. So, I ask the question this morning...

Is your spiritual activity real?

Let me show you three principles that will help us to see if our spiritual activity is real.

Analyze our Motivation for Spiritual Activity.

There are a couple of phrases that really drive this text. The first is in verse 1: “Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.” The other phrases are “They have their reward” and “Your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.” These phrases recur at the end of the introduction of each of the three illustrations of spiritual activity.

Our motivation for spiritual activity can be answered by these two questions that we get from these key phrases.

Is our Spiritual Activity based on Recognition?

Is our Spiritual Activity based on Reward?

“You know Lord, how I like to serve You with great emotional fervor in the limelight. You know how eagerly I speak for You at Women’s Clubs. You know how I effervesce when I promote a fellowship group. You know my genuine enthusiasm at Bible study....

... But, how would I react, I wonder, if You pointed at a basin of water?

And asked me to wash the calloused feet of a bent and wrinkled old woman?

Day after day
Month after month
In a room where nobody saw and nobody knew.”
---Ruth Harms Calkin

Right Motivation Assures the Right Manner for Spiritual Activity.

Not only is our motivation important, the manner with which we carry out the activity is important as well.

Our Spiritual Activity ought to be characterized by . . .

- (1) Humility
- (2) Honesty
- (3) Happiness

Right Motivation and Right Manner Allow God to bless us.

“and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

God’s Blessing will be...

Unexpected

Unbelievable

Can you pass the acid test?

The acid test is “Would we do the same activity if no one knows?”

Chuck Colson tells a story about a group of youth from Louisville, Kentucky and the Shively Christian Church. Their youth pastor Dave Stone taught the youth a lesson on servanthood from the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. The youth pastor sent the youth out to go find some practical way to be servants. They sent the youth in teams. One team went to Shively Baptist Church and asked if there were any elderly members who needed some work done. These teenagers spent the next two hours mowing, raking, and cleaning up the house of one of the members from Shively Baptist. Later as they were back at the church reporting what they had done, the kids noted how the woman said upon their leaving, “I don’t know what I would do without you kids from Shively Baptist?” “Shively Baptist?” the youth pastor said, “I hope you set her straight on where you were from?” “No,” the kids said, “We didn’t think it mattered.”

We can learn a lot from kids like that.