

Sermon on the Mount – Why we do what we do

Ex – Drums and rudiments or sports and drills.

As we look at Matthew 6:1-18 We will see that Jesus is talking about spiritual disciplines.

- Spiritual disciplines – Disciplines or habits that are designed to develop a person spiritually. Practices that lead to spiritual maturity.

Here, Jesus mentions 3 in particular. **Giving – Praying – Fasting.** But there are others, like reading the Word, meditation, praise, gratitude, attending church, and more.

In all 3 of these, Jesus will have some things to say about them that are common to all of them. So we will look at those things.

I. Presupposition

- It is given that you are doing these things (theological label = implicit expectation).

Matthew 6:2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed...

Matthew 6:5 And when you pray...

Matthew 6:16 Moreover, when you fast...

- Jesus' pattern – "When you..." The practice of spiritual disciplines is expected by Jesus.

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit

2 Peter 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Spiritual Discipline is beneficial because:

- They enable growth
- They prepare us for difficult times

- They break spiritual complacency
- They help with victory over sin
- They strengthen our faith
- They help bring joy in the Christian life.

The guy on Instagram (Brian Guan) who pretends God is real.

- He practices 4 disciplines every day
- Prayer – Gratitude – Read the Bible – Apply His teachings
- Ends up changing his life

II. Not for the praise of others. – Why are you doing these things.

- Why do we do what we do?
- One of the biggest dangers in the Christian life is when we do what we are supposed to do, but with the wrong motivation or in the wrong manner.
- The true test of a person's character is what they do when no one is watching.
- In Jesus' day, these became very visible and public. And they helped with your standing in society. Look holy and others believe you are holy.
- How people think – Are you good at this? How God thinks – Why are you doing this?

Charity

Matthew 6:1-4 "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.

- Charitable deeds = Benevolence. Giving.

- Jesus is looking at the motivation of the heart for doing a charitable deed
- Don't sound a trumpet.
- The way we do these things reveals what our motivation is
 - And Jesus outright states that our motivation is tied to our audience
 - Who are we doing this for?
 - If we must make sure others know what we are doing – that shows that people are our audience.

Mark 12:41-44 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many *who were* rich put in much. ⁴² Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. ⁴³ So He called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; ⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."

- Jesus believed the widow was the best giver.
 - It had nothing to do with the amount
 - It had everything to do with her heart and her faith.
- Why do we give?
 - To impress others with our holiness?
 - Because we are supposed to?
 - Corporations like to give with a giant check and make it obvious. Why? Draw attention to the giver.
 - When man is our audience – we want to impress people with our generosity.
- God is a giver. Jesus gave His life for us.
- We give because we are in the image of God, and because we have the life of Christ in us.

Giving does not make you generous.

- Generosity is a great attribute. But as believers we actually lack the ability to be generous.
- God is generous. You steward what God has given you.
- Generosity vs. Stewardship

- We do not own it – You can only be generous with what is yours
 - But if we truly believe everything is God's, then we are stewards.
- We think any giving is a sacrifice. It is a cost. But if everything is of God, then the cost is His.
- (We will talk about giving next week)
- Is it wrong for people to see it?
 - I have disclosed our giving
 - It all goes back to motivation.
 - Not seeking praise from man / Being an example and model

Praying

Matthew 6:5-8 "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.

- Are you praying to impress people with your spirituality?
- Is your prayer performative? Especially public prayer!
- Is your prayer gossip?
- Prayer is talking to God. No other reason!!!!

In those days lots of public praying. Prayer on street or Synagogue.

But Jesus was not impressed with these displays.

- **Matthew 15:8** "*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*"
- How did Jesus view prayer?
 - Go into your room – Tameion – storehouse, dispensary
 - Jesus saw prayer as a source. Strength, provision, comfort, growth, wisdom, knowledge.
 - Jesus warned against vain repetitions. What are we thinking? Who are we trying to impress?

- You are not heard for your many words – You are heard for your faith!
- (Compare Elijah vs. Prophets of Baal)
- **1 Kings 18:26** So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But *there was* no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.
- They danced, cut themselves and prophesied until evening
- **1 Kings 18:36-37** And it came to pass, at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel and I *am* Your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at Your word. ³⁷ Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and *that* You have turned their hearts back to You again."
- Marathon prayers do not equal more of God hearing you.
 - This does not mean don't pray for long periods. There is a time for that.
- But consider the weight of your words more than the length of your prayer.

Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18 "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. ¹⁷ But 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.

- Fasting is abstaining from food for a period of time.

- It is denying our flesh. Disconnecting from the physical world.
- Fasting reinforces that the physical is to be in submission to the spiritual.
- Fasting reflects pursuit after God.
- When man is the audience we want to impress others by our suffering.
- If we are fasting to deny our flesh, then gratifying our flesh through looking pious in the eyes of people is defeating the purpose!
- What do we do?
 - Be normal when fasting.
 - Also, don't lie. It's ok to say you are fasting if people are trying to get you to eat.

Fasting is to change focusing on your physical needs to focusing on the Father. It is to be seen by God. Not by others.

III. There are rewards involved. Either from people, or from God.

Jesus says if your motivation is man, then you get what you wanted.

- There is no heavenly reward for those doing this for man.
- If all we seek is what is on this earth, all we will get is what's on this earth.

BUT – Jesus also said that when we seek the audience of only God, we would be rewarded! And rewarded openly!

- Tina and I have constantly been mistaken as being wealthy. Because God rewards us openly.
- But perhaps even better than that, there are eternal rewards:
- **2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
 - We will stand before the judgement seat of Christ for rewards.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become

clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

- Anything done for wrong reason, or without faith, will be burned up.
- **Romans 14:23** But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Conclusion

When God is our audience we are setting aside the temporary to focus on the eternal.

Spiritual Disciplines are not for our approval – they are for our benefit!

Do you give, pray, fast, read the Word, etc... If not, are you really a disciple (a disciple is one that follows Jesus and is active in growing spiritually)?

Colossians 3:23-24 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.