

Matthew 6

Giving to the Needy

¹"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.

²"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. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

⁵"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹"This, then, is how you should pray:

" Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us today our daily bread.
¹²Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.' ¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Fasting

¹⁶"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

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1. Take time to read through the entire 18 verses.
 2. What is the structure of this passage? Does it have movements? If so, what would you suggest they are?
 3. Are there parallel ideas in each movement? – Similar words, phrases, ideas?
 4. Can you come up with a good sentence or phrase that summarizes the entire passage – an idea that resonates throughout each section?
 5. How does the Lord's Prayer fit into this structure? How can this prayer help overcome the problem that Jesus is addressing?

6. Thinking about our present situation – what kind of rewards might come to people who practice their ‘acts of righteousness’ in a public way? Where do you see this happening in our lives today?
7. What is so appealing about these kinds of rewards? Do you see this tension in your own life and relationship with God?
8. Does this teaching of Jesus suggest that we should never serve, pray, or practice righteousness in ways that can be seen by others? If not, what is he getting at?
9. Why do you think doing these things in a ‘secret’, ‘hidden’, or ‘unseen’ way leads to greater reward than these same things done in public? What are those rewards?
10. The term ‘Father’ is used several times throughout this passage. What do you think is the significance of that name for God? What are some characteristics of God that we discover in these verses?
11. What is the most difficult part of putting Jesus’ teaching into practice in your life today?
12. How can you use this season of Lent as an opportunity to develop unseen disciplines of righteousness?