



The Sermon on the Mount (Part 4)

Discuss – How can you tell whether someone is a committed Christian or not?
What motivates you to do good deeds?
What do you hope to get out of it?

Read – Matthew Ch 6 v 1 – 4

In this chapter Jesus gives us three examples of how a genuine Christian's love and commitment for God will be expressed in a different way than that of a hypocrite or religious person. The heart of what Jesus is saying, is that a true Christian does his good deeds willingly and for the purpose of pleasing God. They may be left unrecognised and unthanked, but that will not influence them one way or the other because what they do they do to please God not to gain the praises of man. Real Christians are not called to draw attention to themselves and their good deeds but are content to do things in secret with the peace of mind that what they have done has been done for God.

Discuss – Do you think there are people in the church that have/ or do what they do for recognition rather than for God?

Do you think that deep down you do certain things to impress people rather than God?
If you do things to only please God would you be willing to look a fool in the eyes of others for the sake of being obedient to God?
How do you think we can cultivate a desire to work unrecognised knowing our reward is in heaven?

This passage makes it clear that many of the Christians today who are well known popular and esteemed in the eyes of others will have no real reward in heaven. The truth is that many who are seen first in the eyes of the church and people will be last when it comes to receiving their rewards because they have already received so much while on this earth. E.g. a national evangelist who is revered by men will enter heaven in rags, empty handed, whereas that old lady who made the tea and cleaned the church will enter with a crown of solid gold and in the royal robes of righteousness.

Discuss – Do you think you would be willing to work hard behind the scenes, be left unnoticed and unthanked by the world to receive that real reward in heaven?

Read - Matthew Ch 6 v 5 – 15

In this section Jesus is not condemning public pray, but he is standing against those who pray out aloud and make a spectacle of themselves purely out of pride and a desire to be noticed. Jesus makes it clear that those who pray to look spiritual in the eyes of others will not have their prayers answered. Using long prayers for the sake of it and babbling on for ages will not result in answered prayers. Jesus teaches us that real prayer is focused, aimed at God not man and effective in how God answers it.

An important part of answered prayer is that we put the will of God first in what we ask for and also that we learn to forgive others before we come to the place of prayer. Both of these two things if left undone will result in a powerless and frustrating prayer life.

Discuss – What do you think Jesus is saying in verses 14 –15 and how do you feel about it?
Why do you think unforgiveness towards others results in a stunted and unanswered prayer life?

Read Matthew Ch 6 v 16 – 18

In this passage Jesus uses the word "**When**" you fast. Here we see that Jesus expected his people to spend time in a fast and using that time to seek God's face. *Fasting is not a take it or leave exercise but is a direct command from Jesus himself.* Again fasting should be done without no one realising it. We should basically look and act in exactly the same way as if we are not fasting.

Discuss – **what do you think the benefits of fasting are ?**
Why do you think that God wants you to keep your fast secret?

This whole section challenges us on the reason why we do the different things we do in our faith. If we do it for the love of God and to please Him then we will want to do much of our good deeds for others in secret. If we are doing it for ourselves then we will only take jobs that will bring us recognition and will not do the dirty forgotten jobs. A true Christian has a true servant heart towards God and others, **have you?**