

Sermon Title: Leave The Trumpet At Home
Scripture Text: Matt. 6:1-4 (Sermon on the Mount #19)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 11-29-20

We continue in the Sermon on the Mount—the inspired summary of that sermon in Matthew Chapters 5, 6, and 7. I really don't think that's all that Jesus said in that sermon, but this is how the Holy Spirit summarized it and encapsulated it for us through the hand of Matthew, to write it for us in this way (see also Luke 6:20-49).

As we move from Chapter 5 to Chapter 6, there is a very significant change of emphasis, but there's no change of subject. Understand: Jesus did *not* stand up and say, "Today I'm going to deliver three chapters to you"—that was not how this was done; the sermon flows from beginning to end, and it is one unit.

The continued subject—the one that hasn't changed—is: True righteousness. Jesus says you need a "righteousness" that "surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20; NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted). He said, as a matter of fact, you need something that is going to make you "perfect" (vs. 48)—in other words, something absolutely "impossible" for man to do (Mk. 10:27; cf. Ecc. 7:20). So He's been explaining how that righteousness looks when it changes a heart (cf. Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13). That's the continuing subject.

The continuing technique that Jesus uses is: Contrast. He contrasts what that genuine God-given righteousness is like, with the man-centered, works-righteousness, self-righteousness system of the scribes and the Pharisees (Lk. 18:9).

So the new emphasis here is that He switches from talking about what to believe primarily—as He did in the last three-fourths of Chapter 5—to what to practice. And He teaches us that living the righteous life is a matter of consistent heart-motivated obedience to the rule: Love God above all, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39). If you're consistent in applying that, from a heart that is changed by the love of God (Rom. 5:5; 2 Thess. 3:5), then your righteousness will show (Matt. 13:23).

In this process, here in Chapter 6 He is going to give three illustrations of religious activity that is motivated rightly. He's going to choose giving, praying, and fasting. Giving has to do with your religion as it acts toward others. Praying is how your religion looks as you act toward God. Fasting is your religion as it acts toward yourself, and dealing with your own desires.

Today, four verses. They outline very conveniently into four points. Verse 1 is: The General Principle; and this general principle is then illustrated three times on giving, praying, and fasting. Verse 2 is: How Not To Give. Verse 3 is: How To Give. And Verse 4 is: Why To Give.

So, Verse 1 states The General Principle, and then He begins to illustrate. Matthew Chapter 6, Verse 1—"Beware..." When you see that word "Beware," that means: Danger! There's something here that you have to be looking out for, be on guard against, and *make sure* you don't let yourself go into this dangerous place! "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven."

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"Practicing your righteousness" means: taking what you have in your heart—that which God has wrought in your heart—and putting it into practice; but doing that *improperly*—that's the danger that you need to stay away from. "Practicing your righteousness" improperly is the right things—or, the right-appearing things—done from a wrong motive.

That wrong motive is right there in the verse: "...to be noticed by men." That's a strong statement. What is translated "noticed" is the word from which we get our English word "theater." Think about that. You don't want your religion to be *theatric*. The sin that Jesus is describing is: Doing righteous deeds in such a manner that they are a *spectacle* for other people to see—as if they bought a ticket and went to the theater. He's talking about *putting on a show* of righteousness (cf. Matt. 23:5).

And the phrase clearly speaks of purpose; He's talking about motive—the motive of making sure people see you. From looking at the next verse, it's obvious that the word that Jesus Himself picked to describe putting on a show of righteousness is: hypocrisy. That word "hypocrite" is one of those words that, if you know the English word, you probably know a Greek word and you just don't know that you know it. The Greek word is *hupokritēs*; it transliterates into English as "hypocrite."

A *hupokritēs* was an actor who wore a mask designed to exaggerate or accentuate or overstate the role that the person is dramatizing. You know the famous tragedy-and-comedy masks; or, maybe you've seen some old-style plays where people actually wore masks or held them to portray who they were so that people's imagination would take them to the character, and the person behind the mask wouldn't be seen or understood. So that became the most natural word in that language to describe anyone who pretends to be what he or she is not.

And what is Jesus's assessment of that kind of religious practice? "You have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." A couple sentences later, He's going to say: "Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full." If you do good deeds—religious acts—*so that* someone will see you and be impressed, then if someone sees you and is impressed, you have your *entire* eternal reward. God is *sickened* by hypocrisy! When you do righteous deeds so that you intend people to be impressed, you're magnifying *yourself*. You're supposed to be giving glory to God! We'll look back on Chapter 5, Verse 16 in a little bit. People should be able to "see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven," but when you point it to yourself, God is *not* impressed at all.

That's The General Principle. Now, let's turn to the first of the three illustrations about giving. Verse 2: How Not To Give. Jesus says: "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full."

Understand: behind all of this stuff, Satan constantly—as the consummate "liar" (Jn. 8:44), as the prototypical counterfeiter (2 Cor. 11:14)—loves to cultivate two forms of hypocrisy among the people of God; he'll try to plant hypocrites in two ways.

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The most blatant one is to have nonbelievers masquerading as Christians (1 Cor. 15:34; Jude 4, 12). These are the ones that Jesus describes as "tares among the wheat" (Matt. 13:25). A "tare" is a weed that looks just like wheat, until just about the time of harvest. Those are people who are deceived into thinking that they belong to God when they don't (Matt. 7:22-23); or, maybe even worse, they could even be deceivers who are intentionally seeking to infiltrate in order to lead people astray (Acts 20:29-30).

But the second form of hypocrisy—which maybe Satan delights in just as much—is that of true believers who are sinful, but pretending to be spiritual. In other words: not dealing with their heart, operating from an evil heart, and then whitewashing it—making it look good (Gal. 2:11-13).

The warning that Jesus gives about "Beware! Don't do it this way!"—that applies to both kinds of hypocrites. If what you portray to other people is *not* what you are on the inside, He is speaking *directly* to you!

I ran across a quote from Augustine on this verse; he says this: "The love of honor is the deadly bane of true piety. Other vices bring forth evil works, but *this* brings forth good works *in an evil way*. Hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue." Isn't that good? How much *more* diabolical it is to do something that looks good—even *is* "good" in the act itself—and do it from an evil heart (Prov. 21:27). What a wonderful way to *misrepresent* God (Jer. 7:9-10; cf. Prov. 7:10-15).

Notice that Jesus says here: "*When* you give to the poor..." That means He's talking about something that He expects people to do. He doesn't say, "*If* you give to the poor, *if* you give alms..." He's saying, "*When* you do it..."

To "give to the poor," or, giving "alms" (Acts 3:2)—we don't usually use the word "alms," but it is a very good word; it's a translation of a word that is based on the root that means "pity" or "mercy" or "compassion"—it means to show compassion or exercise mercy toward other people. We have a fancy word in English; unless you are a lawyer, or maybe a CPA, you probably don't know this word, but it's a great one: "eleemosynary". "Eleemosynary" means charitable; supported by, or dependent upon, charity; or, given by charity—something gratuitous, something that is free. The church is an "eleemosynary" organization; your contributions are "eleemosynary" acts, meaning: they're charity. It's by giving. We don't operate business to make a profit; it's a result of giving.

Jesus presumes that people who love God—and how do you spot them? Well, see all of the Beatitudes, describing people whose hearts have been changed—He presumes that people who love God are going to give charitably (Eph. 4:28; cf. Ps. 112:9; Lk. 14:13).

In this particular context, and with the words He uses, His emphasis is on giving that is specifically designed to help with immediate needs. To "give alms" or to "give to the poor" means to help a person in need at the moment. Like, for example: we're a church; we're a group of people who work together to serve Christ, to be part of His process of building the church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:19-22); and every year, you are presented with

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a budget, which is broken down into several categories. Now, it's not exactly a romantic idea to give toward the last HVAC unit went out and needs to be replaced; that's not *fun*, but that's part of having the building to be the facility to facilitate the things that need to be done. There's the matter of paying the utilities. There's the matter of supporting people who head up ministries. But then there's the category we call "Benevolence," and that's what this is talking about: Giving specifically to address urgent needs of people who can't help themselves.

The custom that Jesus is referring to was part of the function of the temple in Jerusalem. There was a specific place there to give for the needy, or to give your "alms," or to contribute to help the poor. This was not part of "tithing." People think God requires you to give ten percent. Actually, as part of "tithing" in Israel, He required Israelites to give a tenth every year, and then another tenth every year, and then a third tenth every third year. Those things supported the priesthood and the temple and the theocratic government of Israel. Giving alms was completely over and above that; a matter privately, between you and God—strictly an act of compassion.

The tragedy is that in the time of Jesus, giving alms had become an *art form* for hypocritical pseudo-religious showoffs. They *loved* to have people see how generous they were! The problem is *not* that poor people weren't being helped. They were; the alms that went into that receptacle in the temple treasury *did* go to help the poor. The tragedy was the perversion in the heart of the people who were giving for the wrong motive.

We know that the rabbis of that era helped along this practice of phoniness, just as they had corrupted the teaching of the Law. How many times did Jesus say, "You have heard that it was said...but I say to you"? He pointed out how they were twisting what God said (Mk. 7:9-13).

We have some statements from Jewish authorities that were recorded later, but it reflects the situation in the First Century; from two Jewish apocryphal books, we have these words: In the Book of Tobit, Chapter 12, Verse 8—"It is better to give to charity than to lay up gold." So far, so good. *Jesus* is going to say, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19-20); that part is good. But listen to what the whole section says: "It is better to give to charity than to lay up gold, for charity will save a man from death; it will expiate any sin." "Expiate" means "atone for." Or, there's "The Wisdom of Sirach"—another apocryphal book—Chapter 3, Verse 30: "As water will quench a flaming fire, so charity will atone for sin." Now that, my friends, is just a little bit off—*by 180 degrees...Totally* the opposite of what the Bible teaches!

And understand: It is because of false doctrine like *that* that many Jews in Jesus's day believed that salvation was much easier for a rich person, because that person could buy his way into heaven by being generous to the poor! He would *at least* get an inside track! If you can actually atone for your sins, squelch the flaming fire of the wrath of God by giving to the poor—Hey, *where do I give?* Sign me up for that!

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Now, does that bring to your mind a passage that we studied in Mark? Jesus evoked a very strong reaction when He said this, in Mark 10:25—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." He said that to people who had been taught that the rich had an inside track on getting into the Kingdom of God because they could give more to the poor than could a poor person.

So that caused quite a reaction on the part of His disciples; we go on to Verse 26—"They were even more astonished and said to Him, 'Then who can be saved?' " *They* knew how simple it was to get a camel through the eye of a needle—*you can't do it!* That was a statement of impossibility! It was like saying, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48), or that you need a "righteousness" that *totally* "surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20).

Verse 27—"Looking at them, Jesus said, 'With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.' " What is the "it" that is "impossible"? "Then who can be *saved*?" On their own, by man's works—*absolutely no one!* You need God's "grace" to be "saved" (Eph. 2:8-9; cf. Rom. 3:20-24). You *can't* get to Heaven by paying a toll along the road on Earth. Salvation is *only* by the "grace" of God (2 Tim. 1:9); and for man, it is impossible (Ps. 49:7-9; Prov. 20:9; Jer. 13:23; Jn. 14:6; Gal. 3:21).

Understand: That was one of the many heresies of the First-Century scribes and Pharisees, but it was not only a First-Century heresy. Like a barnacle, that one has attached itself to Christianity and travelled through the centuries. Consider this statement from Pope Leo the Great, in the Fifth Century, 400 years later: "By prayer, we seek to appease God." Now again, that's just a little bit wrong—*by 180 degrees*. You don't *appease* God through prayer! How, in *any* way, do you lower the wrath of God against you by praying? *That's utter nonsense!* It's pure blasphemy! But he goes on: "By fasting, we extinguish the lust of the flesh"—well, a little closer on that one—"and then, by alms, we redeem our sins." In other words: Our alms do what Jesus did—*but they can't!* They don't! (1 Jn. 2:2)

As did the Pharisees of the First Century, the Roman Catholic Church tragically teaches that you *can* do things that *contribute* to your eternal redemption! And that's *tragically wrong* (see Phil. 3:9). Oh, and by the way—they aren't alone! The same thing is true in all the variants of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The same thing is true in the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints." The same thing is true among the "Jehovah's Witnesses." The very same thing is true among liberal Protestants. *Anything* that says you can contribute *anything* to merit salvation or to appease the wrath of God—that anything you do can help with that—is *antithetical* to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (see Acts 15:11; Rom. 4:4-5; Heb. 10:14).

Back to our text: Matthew 6, Verse 2—"So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you..." Now, that conjures up quite a picture, doesn't it? The fact is, we have no evidence whatsoever—from history or from archaeology or from early Christian writings or from Jewish writings—we have no examples of anyone *literally* blowing a trumpet to announce that they were giving. Obviously, it's a figure of speech.

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Now, who knows? About the time I say that, and this sermon gets published on the Internet, some enterprising, zealous archaeologist is going to uncover the presence of a temple almsgiving trumpet that he found. I think it's just a vivid word picture. He's describing the *effects* of doing righteous things with the motive of being seen by men. If your motive is to be seen by men, why don't you just carry a trumpet around, and every time you do something good, blow your trumpet and say, "Look at me! Look what I did!" That's what He's saying. It's the *motive* that is the issue.

And He says about that: "Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full." When a hypocrite gets praise for what he or she does—when somebody says, "Oh, that was great, what you did!"—when that hypocrite hears that, that's all the reward they get for all of eternity (cf. Ps. 17:14). Because, you see, when you seek the blessing of man, you *forfeit* the blessing of God (Lk. 16:15; Jn. 5:44)!

We need to serve *the Lord*; and things that we do for man are things that we do *for God*, and therefore we love to serve those who are created in His image—but it's the motive to glorify God (2 Cor. 8:5; Heb. 13:15-16; 1 Jn. 3:17).

There are many subtle trumpets that people can use to call attention to their good deeds, to their generosity. But whenever you see someone make a point of doing something publicly that they could do privately, as far as a good deed—that's crossing the line into hypocrisy. The real trumpet-sounding is *on the inside*. It's pride. It's the heart that isn't right before the Lord, and God judges the heart (1 Sam. 16:7; Heb. 4:12).

I see a corollary of this, and I can't move on without pointing this out to you. I think you'll find that the text supports this, but I think it is frequently ignored. I want to submit to you that it is just as wrong when Christians use fundraising methods that *appeal* to wrong motives! I think *that* is just as wrong as the wrong motive itself. I've heard people on radio, Internet, and TV read the names of donors who sent in money.

There's one guy who used to be on the radio around here, and if my blood pressure wasn't high enough, I'd flip on his program while I was driving around; and he would tell how much so-and-so gave. He once mentioned, as a *praise-worthy* thing, the person who had put the largest amount on a credit card! *Go in debt* to glorify God by giving to me and my ministry!

What does that accomplish? Well, I know that, maybe for me more than others, it *embarrasses* me. I've been involved in using Christian broadcasting as a means of outreach for over 40 years, and I know that the use of antics like that means that I have to live with some of the blowback from that, and the image that hypocrites like that create for broadcasters. It seems to me that reading names and amounts on the radio is designed to appeal to the flesh—the secret desire that people will *notice me*; and it sends the unspoken message: Send me money so you can get your name in the paper, on the Internet, on the radio, on the TV—whatever. It is *equally* as wicked to *appeal* to a wrong motive as it is to *have* a wrong motive.

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Now, I *expect* baloney from the world, but I've had a lifetime dose of Christian organizations, and even churches, giving framed certificates, publishing names of donors, offering recognition—"Why, if you'll give 50 percent of the cost of this project, we'll name the new wing after you!" I don't need anymore "wings," okay? However many the Lord is going to give me—that'll be just fine, if I actually get a wing.

If it is hypocrisy to give for reasons like that, then it is hypocrisy to *solicit* giving for reasons like that. I have been in a church that I was visiting where there was a certain time in the service when the pastor came down from the pulpit and stood behind a table like we would use for the Communion table, and then pointed to people and asked each head of household to come and file by and put their pledge in for what they were going to do for what I think was a building program—or, it can be missions, or anything else. I mean, "No peer pressure, folks! Just, okay, you go first, you go second, you go third; and I'll stand here, and I will watch!" That is *disgusting*.

In the early church, how did they do "fundraising"? They *didn't do* "fundraising." They preached the Word of God. When there was a need, they shared the need, and the people of God responded. And Paul wasn't shy about sharing the need of the poor in Jerusalem, and he asked the Gentiles to give to the Jewish brethren (2 Cor. 8:1-4, 7), and he took that offering with him to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-26). He wound up getting arrested, wound up being in prison for a few years, wound up in Rome. That's how they "raised money"—*they didn't raise money!* They just told God's truth, called on His people, prayed, and waited on the response.

So, there is The General Principle, and there is How Not To Give. And then, Verse 3—when it comes to giving to the poor: How To Give. Matthew Chapter 6, Verse 3—"But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing..." Now, that's a proverbial statement. Frankly, my left hand is kind of stupid, and it *doesn't care* what my right hand does; sometimes, I think that's a description of a physiological problem that I have, that my left hand doesn't know what my right hand is doing. But what He is saying is: This describes something that is inconspicuous; it's not done for a show. At the temple treasury in Jesus's day, there was a series of receptacles into which people could put their offerings; and you would designate which offering it was by which receptacle you put it into, and there was one for giving to the poor—giving alms. That was the place where Jesus sat and observed people putting in their gifts, and He made the comment about the large sums that rich people put in, and that widow who He said was more generous than the wealthy because she gave "all she had" (Mk. 12:44). We're going to come back to that in a few minutes, too.

So, imagine a couple of hypocrites walking along. Let's modernize it—we don't have too many Jewish temples that you and I can visit these days, so let's suppose they're walking out of the grocery store where the Salvation Army volunteer is ringing the bell, standing next to the kettle; and one of them says, "Bill. I want to help the poor today. Can you break a hundred-dollar bill so I can give fifty?" Calling attention to yourself—the silent trumpet blares out across the whole parking lot! People notice who it is, and that guy that gave the fifty is going to go home with his full eternal reward in hand.

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Then, along comes a quiet man who just shuffles along with the crowd; these days, six feet behind the person in front of him, six feet away from the person next to him; and he just kind of slides over and slips something into the kettle—nobody sees it, nobody hears it, he doesn't say anything, and the guy walking to his left doesn't even see what's going on. *That's* what it means to "not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." *That man* goes home blessed with a secret that is known only to him and to his Heavenly Father; and He is going to be willing, joyfully, happily waiting to "repay him" for his generosity (Prov. 19:17).

For a Christian, giving should be private, between you and the Lord. Announcing it, drawing attention to it so that others will be impressed—that's just nothing other than hypocrisy. The most satisfying giving is done, and then, if you will, forgotten. You give it to the Lord, you entrust it to Him, it's for His glory—and you walk away. There aren't strings attached! You just joyfully give as unto the Lord.

Now, I want to add a balancing comment, lest there be room left for a misunderstanding. This passage *does not mean* that all good works must be done in absolute secrecy. That's not the point. True righteousness cannot be kept completely secret! I mean, if you feed somebody, they know you fed them. If you help somebody, they know you helped them.

We should not pretend that the motive is secrecy, either. Jesus said this earlier in this very same sermon: Matthew 5:16—"Let your light shine before men"—in other words, people are going to see you live your life out in the open—"in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." So, do it in a manner and with an attitude that points to God, not to you and how wonderful *you* are. The question is not whether or not our good works should ever be seen by anybody else; it's the *motive*. When the *motive* is that they be seen and we be praised, then we've spoiled the whole thing. When the glory and the credit is focused on God and not on you, God is pleased (Ps. 115:1; Is. 42:8a).

So, back in Chapter 5, Verse 16, you might notice that it comes after the verses before it; and before that, Jesus had talked about being "persecuted for the sake of righteousness" (vs. 10). And what do you do? "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"—and they might prefer to dispatch you to be with your Father in heaven as well (Ps. 69:9b; Jn. 15:18-19).

So, Verse 16 is to deal with our cowardice; it exhorts us to stand up for righteousness in a sin-ridden society, to do everything we can for the glory of God. When we get here in Chapter 6, this is dealing with the sin of hypocrisy, and it exhorts us to be motivated by eternal rewards and the glory of God, not for fleeting accolades. One old commentator put it this way: "We are to show when tempted to hide, and hide when tempted to show." That balances Matthew 5:16 with all of Chapter 6.

So you've seen The General Principle. You've seen How Not To Give. You've seen How To Give. Now: Why To Give. Verse 4, continuing the sentence from Verse 3—"so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

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The theme is here, and we're going to hear it again and again in this chapter, just like we heard it over and over in Chapter 5: God deals with *the heart*. He rewards good deeds that flow from pure hearts. External actions—even if they're good things, in and of themselves—they are hypocritical rubbish as far as eternal rewards are concerned, *if they do not come* from a heart that is transformed by God (Jn. 3:21; 15:5; Heb. 13:21)—a heart that yearns for God to get the glory! There is no greater satisfaction—I don't think there's any greater earthly joy—than knowing you have pleased God (2 Cor. 5:9); and therefore, you've put yourself in a position for Him to live up to who He is, and He will bless you. Do it "so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

Let me give you a couple of parallel passages that expand on that, and then we'll be done. Luke 6:38—"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." You give—let God bless you.

Second Corinthians 9:6. This is in the context of the Apostle Paul writing to the church in Corinth about that offering—that almsgiving—that he was collecting from them to take back to Jerusalem; and he says this: "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." Listen: You can't plant six kernels of corn, and then *harvest a bushel!* You reap according to what you sow.

Now, let me make a couple of comments about this kind of unhypocritical generosity that God blesses—just a quick few points to wrap this up:

Number 1—Giving is investing with God. Trust the investment to Him, and then enjoy the dividends. You *might* get some now; you *will* get them in eternity. Let God figure out how to bless you. Give for His glory.

Number 2—Understand: God blesses *sacrificial* giving. In God's eyes, the amount that you give is judged in reaction to what you have (2 Cor. 8:12). Jesus said that the widow who gave her last two coins—she gave "all that she had to live on" (Lk. 21:4)—Jesus says she gave *more* than the large sums that were given by rich people. That's because God does accounting in a different way; He measures what you *give* against what you *have*.

A lot of people like to talk about "tithing"—give ten percent. It's pretty easy—just move the decimal point over one place, and you know how much to give. But for some people like that woman, that widow, giving ten percent would be *spectacularly* sacrificial. For many people, giving *only* ten percent would be sinfully *stingy*, if you're looking at it from the perspective of, "What has God entrusted to me, and how might I glorify Him with it?"

And by the way: If you remember our sermon on that passage where the widow gave her last couple of coins, remember that not only is she evaluated based on what percentage she gave, which in her case was a hundred—you can't do that real often; she was giving it out of desperation—but remember, the point of that passage is that the people who set up that system "devour[ed] widows' houses" (Matt. 23:14). They had worn her down to the

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point that that was all she had; but she—out of a heart that I think was motivated to do the right thing, even though there's no indication she was following the Savior—she gave that, and I think she went home figuring, "If I die, I die." So, even in the context of corrupt leaders, the right attitude toward giving is: Give as unto the Lord. Now, that doesn't mean you're entitled to be corrupt, if you're the one handling the offering.

Number 3—Would you understand also that material giving is related to spiritual blessings. You're never going to be entrusted with responsibility for things of great spiritual significance unless you show yourself faithful with giving money.

A friend reminded me of something that I had said a very long time ago; and I wish I had thought of it this week, but he reminded me. He said, "At that time, I had never given a dime to a church in my whole life. I had just come to know the Lord. And I heard you say that, 'If God doesn't have control of your checkbook, He doesn't have control of your heart.' " He changed—not because I'm so brilliant, but because God changed his heart.

But understand the principle of Luke 16:10-11—"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much." Now, we don't have anything recorded there, but you might say, "What do You mean by 'a little'? What do You mean, 'a small thing'? What do You mean, 'a big thing'?" Jesus explains: "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?"

Now, that doesn't mean that wealth is unrighteous; it is not *evil* to have money. It means that having money—having things—has no *moral* attachment to it, has no moral value to it; it's *the value that you place on it* (1 Tim. 6:17; cf. Lk. 12:15; Ps. 52:7), and it's *how you use it*. So if you can't handle something that is entrusted to you by God, don't expect Him to give you more; don't expect Him to give you more serious responsibilities.

There needs to be congruity between your profession of faith and the way you live—that's the point! That's the healthiest life that you can live—not to mention, the only way that you can spend eternity with God instead of in "the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10, 14-15). Integrity is healthy; hypocrisy is deadly—both now, and for eternity.

I mentioned that when we put together church ministry, budgetary kinds of things, there are different categories that things will go into. I didn't mention the one that applies most to this passage—that would be "almsgiving." We call it "The Benevolence Fund." We keep that money separate from everything else; and we have a team of only three people who make the decisions—within a set of guidelines that we have imposed upon ourselves, before the rest of the Elders—and only three people make those decisions about how that money is going to be allotted. *That way*, we have the smallest number we can have, and still have accountability. We have the smallest number we can, where even if one person is gone, there's at least two out of three that can help make a decision. *And* we can keep that *as quiet as possible*. We have been blessed here—we haven't solicited money for the Benevolence Fund for a few years. Do you know why? People give to it, quietly.

Sermon Title: Leave The Trumpet At Home
Scripture Text: Matt. 6:1-4 (Sermon on the Mount #19)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 11-29-20

Sometimes it's people who have been helped by it. I know of situations where someone has been helped through pure generosity—whether it came from the Benevolence Fund or not—and so then, they start contributing to the Benevolence Fund. And some people say, "Well, I want to pay that back," and we make it very clear: "You *can't* pay it back, because it's not a loan! It's a gift! The Lord provided this! Glory to God! Thank Him!" And then, I've known people who maybe received something worth, say, a hundred dollars, and so then they give ten dollars for the next 200 months to glorify God, to honor God. *That's* how it's supposed to work!

Integrity—there's unity between what you say you believe and how you live (1 Kings 9:4; Ps. 15:2; 26:1; 101:2; 2 Cor. 1:12). Oh, and by the way: Leave the trumpet at home!

Let's pray:

Father, how we do thank You for Your wonderful grace to us in Christ, and how we thank You for Your faithfulness to provide our every need. And here at Heritage Bible Church, we are part of a society, part of a fellowship, where not only are our needs met, but You have given us an abundance, and You have given us the joy to be Your receptacles and Your conduits for spreading that in the name of Christ, so that the Gospel can spread. So have Your way with us, to get Yourself glory through what You do through us; for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.