

Message #18**Matthew 6:1-8**

The great theologian Augustine said the greatest enemy of true spiritual piety is the love of honor. All other vices produce evil works, but the love of honor does good works out of evil motives. G. Campbell Morgan once said, “Probably the vast majority of people are more influenced by what men will say, than by what God Almighty thinks.”

It is clear from this passage that not only does God see everything we do under the auspices of good works, but He monitors the motives behind the good works. In this section, Jesus addresses all kinds of good things which may be done from evil motives.

WE WILL LOSE REWARDS IF WE PLAY ACT OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR SHOW IN FRONT OF MEN.

It is possible to do the very things mentioned in this section with bad motives. Our rewards will not just be determined by righteous acts, but by the motives for the righteous acts.

Now the main thrust of these verses is seen in **verse 1**—Jesus warns His disciples to always check their motives for doing things because one may lose his heavenly reward. If a disciple is doing righteous things for the purpose of being seen and noticed by men, then he loses his reward.

We may recall that back in chapter five, we were told that we were to be the salt of the earth and we are to let our lights shine before men (5:13, 16). However, there is a critical key to this seen in verse 16; namely, we are to do this to glorify God. In other words, what we do before men must have the glory of God at stake and not the glory of ourselves.

The actual Greek word “hypocrite” which shows up in **verses two and five** is one that refers to a play actor, which is one who plays a part on stage (Smith, p. 461). God does not want us play acting our spirituality before others; he wants it real.

AREA #1 – We are not to play act when it comes to giving. **6:2-4**

The actual word “alms” is one that means to have pity on someone by mercifully helping them or giving something to them (Smith, p. 145). It is interesting that **verse two** assumes that God’s people will give alms—not might but “when.” Jesus Christ assumes His people will be generous, giving people who will try and help those who are hurting. It may be something that one does which is physical—physically helping someone do something—or financially giving money to help.

(Ground Rule #1) - Do not sound trumpets when you give alms. **6:2a**

In other words, don’t toot your own horn and broadcast the fact that you did something to help someone else.

(Ground Rule #2) - Do not let your left hand know what your right hand does. **6:3**

The main point of this is keep your help as anonymous as possible. One of the greatest adventures you will ever go on and will see God work is the adventure of helping someone anonymously. When you do something behind the scenes for God and are quiet about it, you can be certain God is pleased and wonderful things happen in His time and His way.

(Ground Rule #3) - Do keep your alms-giving secret. **6:4**

Now when we give, we live in a society in which tax authorities want accurate records of what we gave. So the question arises how do we keep our giving in secret? Let me suggest four ways:

- 1) We keep giving secret by not being proud of what we were able to give.
- 2) We keep giving secret by not broadcasting what we did give.
- 3) We keep giving secret by thanking God for what we are able to give.
- 4) We keep giving secret by not thinking that our rewards are determined solely by an invoice of our giving.

AREA #2 – We are not to play act when it comes to praying. **6:5-8**

First of all, there is nothing wrong with public prayer before men. Jesus did this in this very book of Matthew (i.e. Matt. 14:19). Public prayer was important to the N.T. Church (Acts 2:42; 6:4; 12:5; Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:14; Phil. 4:6). What Jesus is addressing is the attitude behind the prayer. Arno Gaebelein said our modern church prayer meetings are not much better than what is described in these verses. He said he knew men who could pray publicly with much emotion and eloquence and beauty whose entire motive was to be heard of men. Our goal in prayer is not to have flowery verbiage; it is to communicate with a Holy God in godly reverence and earnest (Gaebelein, pp. 134-135).

(Ground Rule #1) - Do not pray to be seen by men. **6:5**

It is possible for a person to want to pray simply to put on a show before men.

(Ground Rule #2) - Go into a private area to pray. **6:6**

It is interesting that in most religious circles the supposed mark of a spiritual prayer life is whether or not the person prays publicly. However, according to God, it is whether or not he prays privately.

(Ground Rule #3) – Do not use meaningless repetition in your prayers. **6:7**

God wants us thinking when we pray

(Ground Rule #4) – Do not be like the religious hypocrites in your prayer life. **6:8**

God knows what we need before we ask, so we don't need to say a bunch of nonsense words.