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Sermon Notes

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Heart Righteousness or Hypocrisy: Good Deeds Sifted Matthew 6:1-21

I. **What is a hypocrite?** The word comes from the **ancient Greeks**, and it meant simply an actor... one who takes part in a play; he usually wore a mask to cover his true identity and the mask became his persona on stage. **To modern non-Christians**, a hypocrite is anyone who goes to church and believes in God or in absolute truth! **To the dictionary**, a hypocrite is a person who fakes beliefs, feelings, or virtues that one does not truly possess... **BUT to Jesus**, a hypocrite is someone who outwardly goes through the motions of love for God and love for neighbor, but whose heart is far from God and has no true concern for neighbor

Matthew 15:7 “These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.”

II. An Overview of Chapter 6

A. Where we have been thus far: Chapter 5... **Law restricts evil actions**

1. Beatitudes: The heart characteristics of the true Christian: 5:3-12
2. Salt and Light: The impact of a true Christian on the world: 5:13-16
3. Christ Fulfills the Law: 5:17-18... Law both negative and positive
4. Heart Righteousness Negatively Described: The Christian & The Neighbor: 5:19-48
 - NO ANGER
 - NO LUST
 - NO DIVORCE
 - NO BROKEN OATHS
 - NO RETALIATION
 - NO HATRED
5. Summary statement: “You must be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

B. Chapter 6: **Christian Piety in Religious Duties, 6:1-21**

1. **KEY:** 6:1 Living for God’s honor rather than selfish honor... **motive is everything**
2. Case studies: three key elements of Jewish daily piety
 - a. charitable giving
 - b. prayer
 - c. fasting **all w/o hypocrisy**

3. Unifying theme: *Live constantly to please an invisible God and for an eternal reward*

C. Hinge passage: 6:19-21 Storing up treasure in heaven

D. Chapter 6: Christian Piety in Physical Concerns, 6:19-34

1. Freedom from materialism, 6:19-24
2. Freedom from anxiety over daily needs, 6:25-34
3. THUS: Freedom to live for God and for heaven: 6:20-21, 33

III. Christ's summary: Living for God's honor rather than selfish honor

6:1 “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.”

A. A matter of motive

1. Chapter 5 has to do with restriction of evil
2. Chapter 6 has to do with active doing of what's good
3. Wicked human heart corrupts each
 - a. on limitations, we tend to look only at the outer deeds... if we haven't murdered, we're okay
 - b. on righteous deeds, we tend to look only on the outer performance... it doesn't matter what our motive is, as long as we do the right thing
 - c. Jesus rips through both of these by staring at the heart: if you are angry in your heart, you are convicted before God... and if you do acts of righteousness FOR THE PURPOSE OF BEING SEEN BY MEN, you have no reward

B. Danger of hypocrisy

“Be careful” = be diligent, be on your guard, be warned...i.e. A BIG DANGER

What danger?? Hypocrisy! Doing something good for an evil reason

Augustine: “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.”

1. Behind idolatry, second most serious sin in Israel
2. Hypocrisy in religion a big problem in the Church... WITNESSING

C. Delicate balance of the Christian life

1. Christian life may seem to be contradictory

Matthew 5:16 “Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds...”

Matthew 6:1 “Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men...”

2. Only contradictory on the surface... issue is motive

Matthew 5:16 “Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds AND PRAISE YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.”

Matthew 6:1 “Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men IN ORDER TO BE SEEN BY THEM.”

3. The issue is... who gets the glory, you or God?
4. It's not a matter of pleasing men... no it's a matter of pleasing SELF
5. Also, different aspects of same sin... one a craven fear of human disapproval, the other a self-serving desire for human approval... it's really the same thing!!

A.B. Bruce: Play off your temptations... when tempted to hide, show; when tempted to show, hide

D. **Choice #1**: pleasing self versus pleasing God

“Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men to be seen by them.”

Some might think the choice is between pleasing men & pleasing God... no actually a choice between self & God... we may appear so selfless in all our acts of righteousness; but actually the whole time were feeding the “self” monster

1. self wants an easy comfortable glorious life on earth
2. self wants honor and praise and earthly rewards
3. God deserves all honor and praise
4. God deserves that we should live openly and constantly for Him

E. **Choice #2**: living for present or future rewards

1. Issue of rewards seems somehow unchristian

We should be willing to serve God only for Him, and never think about rewards

2. If that's true, why did Christ talk so much about rewards???

Matthew 5:12 "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven..."

Matthew 5:46 "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?"

Matthew 6:1 "If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."

Matthew 6:2, 5, 16 "Truly I say to you, they have received their reward in full."

3. The real choice is, do you want your reward now for a short time, or later for eternity

F. **Choice #3: living constantly before an invisible God**

Genesis 16:13 "You are the God who sees me."

1. God sees everything I do... even if no one else sees it
2. God will reward my invisible acts of righteousness in heaven, for I did them for His eyes only
3. Remind yourself constantly that God sees what I do, knows everything I think

Psalms 139 "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?"

4. Live constantly for only one thing: to please the God before whom someday you will stand

IV. **Case #1: Almsgiving**

- A. Jews believed giving to the poor was highest act of righteousness

Tobit 12:8 "It is better to give to charity than to lay up gold. For charity will save a man from death; it will atone for any sin."

Wisdom of Sirach 3:30 "As water will quench a flaming fire, so charity will atone for sin."

- B. Buying righteousness by good deeds in Roman Catholic church

Pope Leo the Great: “By prayer, we seek to appease God, by fasting, we extinguish the lust of the flesh, and by alms we redeem our sins.”

C. Self-righteousness makes a big show of piety

“Therefore, when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and streets to be honored by men.”

1. No record in archaeology or Jewish writings of announcing gifts with trumpet
2. Jesus using a figure of speech... the ridiculous trumpeting of money given
3. “See how righteous I am... how holy!!” Then people greet you with honor in the marketplaces and give you the seats of honor at the banquets
4. Modern trumpets:
 - a. plaques of charitable giving
 - b. so and so gave such and such to his alma mater or to the church
5. Deeper issue: deriving earthly benefit from giving... totally opposite to faith perspective

D. Danger: No eternal reward

vs. 1 “If you do, you will have no reward from my Father in heaven”

vs. 2 “I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”

1. Word means “account totally paid up in full, account closed”
2. Honor from men sought, honor from men received... account closed
3. Stripped of all eternal value if we seek earthly reward
4. Scary thought: how much of all we have done for the Lord was done with pure motive? How much treasure will be waiting for us in heaven?

Matthew 6:20 “Store up treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 “If any man build on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, for the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned

up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”

E. The Right Pursuit of Reward: Pleasing an Invisible God and Looking to an Invisible Reward

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

1. Left hand & right hand: total secrecy in giving is an act of FAITH
2. Living before an invisible God, seeking His smile
3. Living for a future day of Judgment, seeking an invisible reward
4. Who should you help? Those who can never pay you back!!

Luke 14:12-14 “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

5. This is the faith perspective... I don't want my reward now!! I want God to reward me in heaven
6. On Judgment Day, God will read all the righteous acts I've done for which I sought and received NO EARTHLY BENEFIT... and these are what He will reward
7. Also... we should FORGET our acts of righteousness, not keep a record of them

Story of the sheep and the goats: “Then the righteous will reply, ‘When did we see you hungry, and give you something to eat? When did we see you thirsty and give you something to drink?’” (i.e. they are surprised!! They didn't remember all they had done for Christ!!)

8. God WILL REPAY!!!! He is absolutely accurate and forgets nothing

Hebrews 6:10 “God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped His people and continue to help them.”

- a. strong language... implies it would be unrighteous for God not to reward our loving service to Him

- b. actually a matter of covenant faithfulness... God promised rewards, and He will prove true to His word
- c. BUT all acts of righteousness actually God's own work in us

John 3:21 "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

- 9. What does the Judgment Day reward look like? The opening of books and receiving of crowns!

- a. books record everything we have ever said or done

Revelation 20:12 "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the great white throne, and the books were opened... The dead were judged by what they had done as recorded in the books."

- c. secret motives judged at that time

1 Corinthians 4:5 "The Lord will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."

- d. righteous acts woven together into a crown

1 Thessalonians 2:19 "What is our hope, our joy or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?"

1 Peter 5:4 "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of glory that will never fade away."

- e. crowns cast down before the Throne

Revelation 4:10 The twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say, 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...'

V. Case #2: Prayer

vs. 5-6 "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. But 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.”

- A. Same teaching, different discipline
- B. Open show of righteousness is hypocritical
- C. True prayer is secret prayer
- D. Not that some prayer can't be done in public... God isn't against prayer meetings
- E. Issue is motive & reward
 - 1. Hypocrites LOVE to be seen by men
 - 2. Greek word linked to theater... they like to make a display of their piety
 - 3. Earthly focus for their lives
- F. Remedy: secret prayer life

Jonathan Edwards on Secret prayer: Greatest test of true walk with God

VI. Case #3: Fasting

vs. 16-18 “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. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face so 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.”

- A. Definition of Fasting

Choosing as a free choice to go without food & drink for a period of time for spiritual reasons... others extend it to include other things like entertainment or other forms of earthly pleasure

- B. Why fast? Three reasons
 - 1. Mourning over sin

Matthew 9:15 “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn when he is with them? The time will come when he will be taken from them; then they will fast.”

2. Discipline over body

1 Cor. 9:27 “I beat my body and make it my slave...”

3. Seriousness in prayer

Acts 13:2-3 Church in Antioch fasted and prayed before sending out Paul and Barnabas

B. Jesus’ example: Forty days and forty nights

C. Forgotten discipline... NOTE “When you fast...” not “If you fast...”

D. Bottom line... don’t make a big display over your private piety... if you fast, don’t let anyone know about it

VII. Personal Application: Heavenly Rewards, not Earthly

6:19-21 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

A. Do you have a disciplined life?

1. Do you give to the needy, generously as you are able?

2. Do you pray regularly, rejoicing to spend time with the Father?

3. Do you fast and discipline your earthly appetites?

B. If so, what is your motive??

1. Do you seek an earthly reward? God will see to it that you get it... and nothing else!!

2. Do you seek a heavenly reward? God will be sure you get it... and many other things besides!!

C. BE AS RICH AS YOU CAN IN GOOD DEEDS... BE LAVISH WITH YOUR FUTURE REWARD!!!