"BE REAL"

(The Need to Be Genuine)

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

6/4/2017

INTRODUCTION:

***Be real!** Beware of fake and phony religiosity!

Jesus warns us about the danger of being phony in 3 spiritual activities.

I. Beware of hypocritical <u>giving</u> (v. 1-4)

II. Beware of hypocritical <u>praying</u> (v. 5-6)

III. Beware of hypocritical <u>fasting</u> (v. 16-18)

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INTRODUCTION:

We often have a picture in our minds that a sinner is someone who is living in the gutters of life, someone who spends his time boozing it up, shooting it up, snorting it up; some sexaholic, serial criminal, child molester, rapist; Satan worshipper; someone trapped in the slime and filth of the world.

But did you know that someone could give money, pray, and fast and never do the above mentioned sins. . . and yet be no better in God's evaluation. The most deceitful, hideous, elusive sinner is the one who practices religion with the evil motive of pleasing men.

Doing the right thing for the wrong reasons is worthless!

"The story is told of an eastern ascetic holy man who covered himself with ashes as a sign of humility and regularly sat on a prominent street corner of his city. When tourist asked permission to take his picture, the mystic would rearrange his ashes and give the best image of destitution and humility." (MacArthur, p. 352).

In Mt. 6:1-18, Jesus Christ exhorts his disciples to not make a <u>theatrical show</u> of their spiritual activity. In verse 1, the phrase ***"to be seen"*** is the Greek word "theomai" from which we get our English word "theater." The word "hypocrite" (v. 2, 5, 16) originally referred to a play actor--one who wore a mask to pretend he was somebody or something he was not.

Examples of religious hypocrites:

1) Judas
2) Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8)
3) The Pharisees (See: Mt. 23:14; 25-28)
4) Ananias & Saphira (Acts 5:1-10)
5) Satan and his messengers (*"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end*

shall be according to their works.") (II Cor. 11:13-15)

ILLUS: Aesops' fable of a wolf that disguised itself as a sheep (MacArthur, p. 353)

To summarize this context, Jesus is basically commanding us to:

1. Give without hypocrisy (6:1-4)
2. Pray without hypocrisy (6:5-6)

& 3. Fast without hypocrisy (6:16-18)

***Be real!** Beware of fake and phony religiosity!

Jesus warns us about the danger of being phony in 3 spiritual activities.

I. Beware of hypocritical giving (v. 1-4)

V. 1

"Take heed" - Be careful, beware. This abrupt, serious warning shows us the danger we all face of being insincere.

"Alms" - Acts of righteousness; any righteous deed (whether by word or action)

"Before men" - Since many righteous things are done in the presence of people (it can't be avoided), Jesus is quick to clarify by the words: *"to be seen of them"* (i.e. with a goal, intention, or purpose of having them notice).

Paul's testimony is this: *"For do I not persuade men or God? or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."* (Gal. 1:1-10

Cp. Eph. 6:5-7 - Workers are to work as unto Christ not with *"eyeservice as men pleasers."*

Sometimes when someone does something publicly when they could have done it privately, it may indicate a desire to be noticed (Ex: people who purposely gave me their

offerings, rather than putting it in the offering plate).

Don't try to impress others with your religiosity.

"No reward" - Why not? Because God rewards motives not just mere actions!

Why should God reward someone who did something good, but did not do it for Him?

V. 2

"Alms" - ("elamosune" from "eleamon") meaning "merciful."

Alms giving refers to a merciful benevolence. A charitable giving. A pity that effects the wallet.

"Hypocrites" - those who "play act"; to hide under a mask. To perform under pretence.

The sounding of a ***"trumpet"*** would be so as to get everyone's attention.

"In the synagogues" - where they would give to God

"In the streets" - where they would give to the needy

"Glory of men" - that they might be glorified (honored, credited, extolled, exalted, praised) by men

It is so vain (empty, worthless) to live for men's applause, pat on the back. Those who do so had better savor it and enjoy it because they are going to get nothing from God. --***"They have their reward"*** - They already have received their reward from men.

They wanted man's award and they got it; therefore, when the eternal, incorruptible awards are given out in Heaven, they will not get one.

V. 3

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" - a figure of speech describing how we do not need to inform others about our giving.

Since most of the world is "right handed", perhaps it is usually done by that hand. Don't let the right hand brag to the left.

When we give, we should keep it as anonymous as possible so that only God gets the glory.

V. 4

"Jewish tradition said that there was in the Temple a "Chamber of Secrets" into which the devout used to put their gifts in secret so that the poor could receive support there from in secret" (Ryrie note).

The only eyes we should seek to impress are God's.

He sees every move we make, every check we write, every dollar we give. When no one else sees, God keeps accurate books and He will reward in His time and in full view of others. (His reward will be evident [visible] so as to prove to men that He is faithful.

II. Beware of hypocritical <u>praying</u> (v. 5-6)

V. 5

"They <u>love</u> to pray" - They get a certain emotional thrill about being known as "Godly."

"Synagogues to street corners" - were places where they could be easily seen.

*In the <u>synagogues</u> they would impress the <u>religious crowd</u>
*In the <u>street corners</u> they would impress the <u>social crowd</u> (everyone who passed by)

Note: The greek word translated "street" refers to a very wide, major street -- where they would have a <u>large</u> audience.

Even today the religious Hasidic Jews pray in public view at their times of prayer.

Don't do anything to merely impress men (people). What matters is what God thinks of you.

*NOTE: This verse does <u>not</u> mean that public prayer (Ex: in church) <u>is wrong</u>. See: Lk. 3:21, 11:1; Mt. 14:19; Jn. 11:41, 42; Acts 20:36; I Cor. 14:16. (Ex: Solomon's public prayer at the dedication of the Temple - II Chron. 6).

There is nothing wrong with leading others in public prayer just so long as you are not praying to impress men!

Public prayer is not wrong; wrongly motivated prayer is.

When we pray in public (Ex: at church, at home, etc.) be very careful to pray what you mean, and mean what you pray.

--Use <u>God's name</u> sincerely. To utter the Lord's Name insincerely or without meaning is to take His name in vain! (Exod. 20:7)

--Use your <u>language</u> sincerely. Don't turn on a "prayer language."

Examples:

--1611 "Thee's & Thou's"
--super "spiritual" lingo
--a different tone and inflection than your natural voice
--an extra long prayer (Mk. 12:40)

Beware: Sometimes we are unconsciously tempted to increase the eloquence and length of our public prayers while we decrease in sincerity (ILLUS: One time a preacher in Boston said after praying an ornate and elaborate prayer, "That was the most eloquent prayer ever offered to a Boston audience." Obviously he was more concerned about impressing the audience, than he was in making contact with God.

"The hypocrites' sin was pride, a desire to uplift self, (Note: such prayer is actually prayed to no one but themselves -- See: Luke 18:11)

They wanted the recognition of men, and that is ALL they would receive! *The rewards of men are cheap and hollow.

"Closet" - an inner room; any small room or storage closet. Jesus' point is "pray in the most private room available."

NOTE: Again it must be noted that Jesus is not condemning public prayer; rather, the wrong practices of the Pharisees. The problem is not location but attitude.

Christ is saying: "Go to a private place where you will not be tempted to show off!

V. 6

"After you shut the door" - Don't have devotions just so that others in your family can see or hear

"Reward thee openly - God desires others to see His answers to your prayers, not for other to see you pray.

III. Beware of hypocritical fasting (v. 16-18)

V. 16

"Fast" - The Greek word translated "fast" is nesteia (ne = a negative prefix; and esthio = to eat); hence, the word means to "not eat"

"Fasting" was (and is) a voluntary abstinence from eating food so as to spend the time normally spend in preparing and consuming food in prayer.

Note: Food preparation was a process which demanded more time than in our instant-microwave society.

"Fasting" and "Prayer" are constantly tied together (Ezra 8:23; Neh. 1:4; Mt. 17:21; Mk. 9:292; Acts 13:3; I Cor. 7:5)

You can pray without fasting, but you cannot fast Biblically without praying. Fasting is an affirmation of intense prayer, a corollary of deep spiritual struggle before God. It is never an isolated act of a ceremony or ritual that has some inherent efficacy or merit" (MacArthur, p. 404).

"Fasting" is most often practiced when someone is so burdened (upset) with something that food has no appeal. Their heart is focused on an urgent need so the person mourns and cries out to God for help. Ex: David for his son (II Sam. 12:16, 22); Nehemiah for God's city (Neh. 1:4).

"Fasting" is the response of a burdened or broken heart that is so absorbed with the interests of others or the will of God that one sets aside his own needs and desires and humbles himself and cries out to God with a sincere heart for mercy.

"Fasting" is never a command for a N.T. believer. Jesus said men ought "*always to pray"* but not men ought "always to fast." The words ***"When ye fast"*** assume that believers will do so in their life, but does not command it.

"They disfigure their faces" - they perhaps would frown, such in their cheeks, giving themselves a gloomy appearance.

"They would wear old clothes, sometimes purposely torn and soiled, dishevel their hair, cover themselves with dirt and ashes, and even use make-up in order to look pale and sickly" (MacArthur, p. 401).

(Ex: how some people love to complain about how much they "suffer for Jesus"; some love to act tired or weary so as to impress others of their diligence or hard work)

Our Lord rejects "fasting" that centers on outward appearance.

CONCLUSION:

Leave the bookkeeping to God! He will not miss giving a single reward.

"The greatest reward a believer can have is the knowledge that he has <u>pleased</u> his Lord." (MacArthur, p. 360)

God is interested in the heart, not mere external, insincere displays of piety.

Phony "spiritual" practices cannot fool the Lord.

"You are what you really are when you are all alone."

What you do when no one is watching you reveals your true character.

Too many today, like the ancient Pharisees love "*the praise of men more than the praise of God"*

Christianity is not theatrics, it is not an act, it's not a game of pretending; it's to be a real, genuine relationship with God that results in real, genuine works for God.

In a world of facades, fake appearances, false impressions, deceitful image, masks, artificiality, we can make our greatest impact by just simple being <u>REAL</u> (genuine)!

Whatever you do, <u>do it for God</u>! Let Him be your Reason, your motive, the one you aim to

please! Do it for God! When you do, you are real!