

Following Jesus
12, Principles of Kingdom Living #3:
Secret Sacrifice is Better than Sensational Service

I. Introduction

- a. Jesus is dealing in this passage with hypocrisy
 - i. Hypocrisy root – the wearing of a mask to conceal true identity
 - ii. Hypocrisy carries the idea of pretending to be something different (usually better) than you really are
 - iii. The Lord strongly condemns making yourself look good for the benefit of others
 - 1. It repulses Him
 - 2. Isaiah 1:11 ““Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”
 - a. God says, I hate your ACTS of religion and worship
 - b. I'd prefer you obey me by loving me and others
 - c. They were hypocritical worshippers and God hated it
 - 3. This kind of hypocrisy was still alive and well in Jesus' day
 - 4. Mark 7:6 “He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”
 - 5. Still happening in the church in its infancy – Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira wanted everyone to think they were better
 - 6. What about the church today?
 - 7. 1 Timothy 4:1-2 “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy;”
- b. Hypocrisy IS a problem for modern Christians
- c. If we let this message sink in, this is VERY convicting!

II. Message – “Principles of kingdom-living #3

- a. Give in Secret (our religious activity toward others)
 - i. Don't seek human recognition for giving
 - 1. “1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a

trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

2. "Doing of alms" – the ACT of giving to those in need
3. This is a big topic, but simplified:
 - a. Jesus assumes here that you ARE giving
 - b. There were essentially 2 types giving in Scripture
 - i. Tithes – (OT, tenth) essentially a tax everyone paid
 - ii. Offerings
 1. Offerings to God
 2. Offerings to people (directly to those in need)
 - a. James 2:15-17 "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."
 - b. ALL throughout Scripture: Take care of the poor among you
 - c. Of course, there are many good ways to do this outside the church
 - d. But the safest is still through church
4. So, what should we do?
 - a. Give...cheerfully!
 - b. And do it as anonymously as you can
 - i. If you get a pat on the back, you have your reward
 - ii. You have "NO reward" in heaven
 - iii. Better to keep it between you and God if possible, and have eternal reward
 - iv. Hypocrisy has zero benefit in the Kingdom of Jesus
- ii. Be so private and spontaneous that not even you remember
 1. "3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."
 2. Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing
 - a. Probably a proverb at the time meaning it's not a big deal to you
 - i. You haven't made a calculation
 - ii. You don't care who is watching

- iii. Don't worry so much about amounts
- b. God promises to reward this kind of giving "in secret"

b. (Slide #10) Pray in Secret (our religious activity toward God)

- i. Don't pray to impress humans, talk to God!
 - 1. "5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
 - 2. Don't pray in a way as to attract attention
- ii. Pray privately and correctly – "6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."
 - 1. Pray privately – In your closet
 - a. The word actually means "private room"
 - b. Find the most private place you can and shut the door
 - 1. No one can see you praying
 - 2. No one is impressed
 - 2. Pray correctly (3 things)
 - a. Meaning what you say
 - b. "7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."
 - i. Repetition is OK, but for what purpose?
 - ii. Mean what you say
 - c. Knowing that God already knows what is best for me
 - i. We don't pray to instruct God
 - ii. We are not telling Him what to do
 - iii. "8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."
 - iv. Just talk to God as your Father!
 - 1. It is more about Him instructing you
 - 2. Than you instructing Him!
 - d. Following Jesus' pattern
 - i. Worship – 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

- ii. Submission – “10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”
 - iii. Dependence
 - 1. “11 Give us this day our daily bread.”
 - 2. Paul Miller in A praying Life: “If you are not praying, then you are quietly confident that time, money and talent are all you need in life.”
 - iv. Confession
 - 1. “12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”
 - 2. This is crucial – “14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
 - v. Protection – 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:”
 - vi. Anticipation – For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”
 - 1. Come back quickly Jesus!
 - 2. But until you do, build your kingdom through me for YOUR glory!
- c. (Slide #11) Fast in secret (our religious activity toward self)
 - i. Don’t make your sacrifice obvious
 - 1. “16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”
 - 2. What is fasting?
 - a. Simply, sacrificing food
 - b. But the idea of fasting can extend to any sacrifice for the purpose of closer communion with God
 - i. This is a biblical concept, commended throughout
 - ii. Taking time to focus on God and let Him sustain
 - iii. When does it happen? (biblically)
 - 1. Sadness
 - 2. Fear
 - 3. Guilt (humiliation, sin, confession)
 - 4. Powerful truth
 - 5. Impending Judgement
 - 6. Direction

- a. Biblically, fasting was not about doing something hard to get something from God
 - b. It was about a restructuring of priorities while seeking God
 - 3. Don't make your face sad so others notice
 - 4. Fasting should be between you and God, not for the benefit of others attention!
 - a. Zechariah 7:4-5 "Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?"
 - b. He is rebuking them here!
 - c. How about your heart?
 - d. Did it have anything to do with me?
- ii. Make your sacrifice between you and God alone
 - 1. "17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."
 - 2. Put on some perfume
 - 3. Wash your face
 - 4. Put on some fresh clothes
 - 5. Have some energy
 - 6. Make your sacrifice between you and God alone
 - 7. If absolutely nobody knows about what I've done
 - a. It's just between me and the Lord
 - b. Maximum eternal reward
 - i. Maybe we could entitle this sermon: "Are you for real?"
 - 1. Do you REALLY want to talk to God?
 - 2. Do you REALLY want to give?
 - 3. Are you REALLY in the middle of reprioritization?
 - 4. Or are you putting on a show for others?
 - ii. Just know, if you are not for real: this hypocrisy repulses God!

III. Conclusion

- a. This really boils down to pride, right?
 - i. We want others to think we are pretty great givers

- ii. We want others to think we are pretty great prayers
- iii. We want others to think we are pretty great sacrificers
- iv. James 4:6-10 “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

b. Jesus is really speaking to 2 Audiences

- i. For the non-Christian, don't think your religious activity can save you
- ii. For the Christian, don't be a hypocrite. You don't fool God
 - 1. Conclusion #1 – Find better ways to privately give to God and those in need
 - 2. Conclusion #2 – Set up your “prayer closet” and use it to pray correctly
 - 3. Conclusion #3 – Reach out to God when things get difficult, but keep your spiritual sacrifices between you and God alone