



“The Audience of One”

November 21, 2021

Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18

[1] “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

[2] “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [3] But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, [4] so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

[5] “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [6] But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

[7] “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. [8] Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

[16] “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [17] But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, [18] that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Hebrews 11:6–7

[6] And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. [7] By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Fun Question: What is the most embarrassing thing you have ever did or said?

1. Every single one of us struggle with this real desire to please other people rather than to please God with our acts of righteousness. That temptation is real in every single one of us. Who are the people in your life that you try to please over God? In other words, "Who is your audience when it's not God?"
2. In the passage, Jesus is not condemning acts of righteousness in public, rather, Jesus is focusing on the intention behind the act. The word 'hypocrite' comes with a good number of different examples and definitions. What Jesus means by the word 'hypocrite' here is someone who fools others (and even themselves) that his or her good deeds are being done for God, when they are really doing it for the eyes of others and their approval. What are the times in your life that you caught yourself being a 'hypocrite'? How did you come to that realization?
3. Describe the times in your life when you knew you were doing things out of a pure heart for God, where you sought out His approval rather than the eyes and praise of others. From your experience, what are some of the felt differences between the two motives of doing things for the approval of man verses pleasing God?
4. The only way we can continue to gain a heart that does things for God and for God alone is to see who He truly is. When we encounter the living God, it is only then that we begin not to care of what others may think of us, but rather how the God I love and who loves me sees me. Whether it's through the spiritual disciplines of secrecy, prayer, fasting, etc., what can you do this week to increase your intimate encounters with God?

Deeper Study:

1. Take time to read, meditate, and study Hebrews 11:6-7. How does faith play a part in having our hearts care more about what God thinks of us rather than man?