

Sermon on the Mount

Lesson #13

“Kingdom Cautions”

Beware of practicing righteousness to be seen by men Part I

Matthew 6:1-18

Scripture: Matthew 5:20 *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Introduction:

One day a man came home from his job at the factory. He was physically tired and emotionally spent with the riggers of the day. When he opened the door the smell of a hot supper and the sound of kids playing brought him back to his senses.

After supper he grabbed his news paper and sat in his favorite chair and began to unwind. His 4 year old daughter was wanting some attention from her dad so she run by and flipped his news paper. This went on several times until both dad and daughter were wrestling around in the floor laughing and having a good old time.

Sometimes children find themselves craving attention and sometimes when they get to much attention they have a tendency to get spoiled rotten.

You know sometimes adults feel like they need to be noticed and they do things to bring attention to themselves.

So far in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus has discussed:

- A. Kingdom character (Be-attitudes)
- B. Kingdom purpose (Salt & Light)
- C. Kingdom fullness (Old and New work together toward God’s eternal plan)
- D. Kingdom righteousness & **how it:**

- 1. Rests on God’s authority
- 2. Takes sin seriously
- 3. Considers its effects on others
- 4. Looks to God for truth
- 5. Extends grace and mercy
- 6. Loves without boundaries

Transitional Statement:

Today as we start into chapter six Jesus begins with the word “*beware*”. In the Greek this has to do with caution and is implicit of danger. So Jesus is saying that in regard to our approach to righteousness there are some ever present dangers.

The word “*beware*” also includes the idea of a sailor out on the ocean holding his course. Not getting off track and ending up shipwrecked, somewhere he doesn’t want to be, or even dead.

I. Christianity is a team effort

Matthew 6:1

I Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

A. So let's start by thinking about the idea that righteousness demands practice, we don't want to miss this point.

1. Have you been watching the Winter Olympics lately?

a. So far I've seen skiing, speed skating, figure skating, and some hockey

b. I also saw a young man from Georgian named Nodar Kumaritashvili die on the Luge track in some event that looks like bob sledding with only one person.

1) The Luge track in Vancouver is said to be the fastest in the world and this very young man with hardly any practice at all slid to his violent death a couple of weeks ago on national TV.

2. When I was in school our coaches always, without exception, had a rule that said if you don't make practice you can't play in the game.

3. Why is practice so important?

a. When we practice anything we identify our areas of weakness that need to be improved.

b. During practice we find our strengths and explore possibilities and look at potentials.

c. Through practice we gain the encouragement of fellow team mates to become all that we can be.

d. And ultimately through practice, we grow stronger

4. Make no mistake about it, righteousness is something that God wants us to practice.

a. It is not a destination that we arrive at.

b. But it is something that we work towards.

1) It is something that we are meant to keep growing in.

B. But here Jesus specifically brings up our motive behind the practice of righteousness.

1. He says beware that your motive is not, to be noticed by men.

2. Now, let's think for a minute about sports in general. There are basically two categories of sports, individual and team sports.
 - a. For the individual sports, coaches look for over-achieving mavericks who most of the time like to do things by themselves and who are over concerned with personal achievement. They are considered as "hot dogs" who love the attention of personal glory.
 - 1) I think Jesus' point is that Christians can be tempted to an individual type of Christianity
 - a) A Christianity of self and self promotion
 - b) A Christianity of distance, un-involvement and isolation
 - c) And a Christianity where personal value is determined by man and not God.

NOTE: Hot dogs are only good for roasting!!!

- b. Then there is the team sports. Where people work together in unison helping each other along toward a common goal. No, one person is more important than the next. And team lifts each person up and always moves along not leaving anybody behind.
 - 1) This team spirit, where we all function as a body, is surely what Jesus is pointing to.
 - a. A Christianity of us instead of me
 - b. A Christianity of involvement, closeness and love
 - c. And a Christianity where God alone determines our value

NOTE: The motivation here is for the team together to move closer to godliness

C. To this, Jesus points out that there is no reward when the wrong motive is used.

1. Interestingly enough Jesus mentions reward 9 times in His Sermon.
2. He wants us to look beyond rewarding ourselves with present personal glories and hold our course toward the great reward reserved for us by God.

II. In regard to our motivation for practicing righteousness Jesus warns us to be careful in three particular areas.

- A. The first area to be careful in is found in: Matthew 6:2-4

2 "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 3 "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

1. Have everyone stand up and visit with each other for a minute or two and then sound an air horn as you publicly and with the microphone give some money to a needy person or organization.
 - a. Ask everyone to be seated.
2. First of all, Jesus warns us to be careful with our giving.
 - a. If our giving is motivated by the attention that we get from it.
 - 1) Then ultimately we are seeking the honor of men, not God
 - a) And that will be our only reward
 - b. Jesus points out that our giving needs to be done in secret....kept between us and God.
 - 1) To the extent that our left hand is not even aware of what our right hand is doing.
 - 2) Giving is something that is sacred between us and God
 - a) It is not meant to be public in any way shape or form
 - b) And any gift given with the need of public recognition would be better off not given at all.
3. You see, rightly motivated giving honors God....not man
 - a. And real giving receives real reward
 - 1) Real giving is not about the temporary fleeting applause of man
 - 2) But real giving is about the pleasing acceptance of our eternal God.

B. The second area to be careful in is found in: Matthew 6:5-15

5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 6 "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

7 "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. 8 "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

9 " Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

10 ' Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

11 ' Give us this day our daily bread.

12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.[For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]

14 " For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

1. Secondly, Jesus warns us to be careful about how we pray

a. He warns us not to pray like hypocrites.

1) NT:5273 hupokrites (hoop-ok-ree-tace'); from NT:5271; an actor under an assumed character (stage-player)

a) The hypocrites He mentions love to put on a show

2) Jesus is reminding us that prayer is not a stage performance

3) And in no way is prayer to be a personal platform for some kind of Christian campaign

2. Here Jesus is pointing out that prayer is the most private and intimate thing we can imagine, and prayer is only to be approached in humility and reverence.

a. With God being the focal point of Honor...Verses 9-15

3. But if we take what is suppose to be an intimate private moment with God and try to use it for personal gain and position with men, we will surely miss the intention of God's reward for us.

C. And the third area to be careful of is found in: Matthew 6:16-18

16 Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting.

Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 17 "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face 18 so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

1. And thirdly, Jesus brings up being careful when we fast.

a. Probably the place to begin with is the simple observation that He doesn't say "if you fast" but "when".

b. Fasting is probably one of the least understood and perhaps the most neglected of Christian disciplines.

1) Fasting in general is going without food for religious purposes.

2) But more specifically, at the foundation of fasting is a deep desire to connect with God and to focus on Him and His will by the yielding our strongest of human desires....food?

2. Again Jesus is saying this isn't to be a theatrical production, where we present ourselves in such a way as to look like a person starving to death.
 - a. Jesus is telling us that when we fast we need to keep up our appearance so that no one will know what we are doing.
 - 1) We aren't to announce it in the bulleting, but privately engage it as we draw near to God.

Conclusion:

So how shall we practice righteousness??????

-In a way that gets God noticed, not us !