

## *Motives Over Methods*

It has been a while since I have had little kids in the home. Whenever I am around my friend's kids I am reminded very quickly of what little kids do...ask a lot of questions. Really little kids ask why the sky is blue or where the sun goes at nighttime. Many three-year-olds will ask why after almost every sentence. Their brains are little sponges, and they have so many questions. If you have kids, you may have had one of your children ask you a question that convicted you. They may have said, "Daddy, why do you and mom fight in the car but are happy at church? Mommy, why do we read our Bibles at church but not at home?" One thing is certain...a curious child can point out your motives really quick.

Well, my 19-year-old not little kid and I were talking about Matthew 6 last week. There was a small debate among me, Gabe, and Nikki about God's reward system. They came to me and wanted a Biblical answer. They wanted to know if you get rewarded more if you do more things for God. Gabriel said that the Scripture in Matthew 6 is clear. But Nikki was arguing that it can be works-focused if you do things in order to get a reward from God. I told them they were both right. If you do the things the Lord asks of you, He will reward you. You will experience blessings. But where you need to be careful is your motives. Are you doing good things just to get a reward from God, or are you doing good works because you delight in blessing the Lord?

Today I have a message titled, "Motives over Methods." God cares more about our motives than He does our methods. He wants us to be a blessing to others, He wants us to give, and to pray, and to fast...but only with the right motives. I want to walk through the Gospel of Matthew chapter six in the first 14 verses. If you have your Bible why don't you open up to Matthew chapter 6 and get really comfortable with an open Bible this morning. I am going to read a little but and then pause to explain some things I believe the Lord wants to reveal to us this morning. Let's begin in verse 1:

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

Jesus can confuse us sometimes. In the previous chapter, chapter 5:16 Jesus tells us to "let our light so shine that men see our good works and give glory to the Father." Some versions translate verse 1 here in chapter 6 as "charitable deeds" rather than righteousness. So, in one chapter Jesus said, let everybody see your righteousness and good works. Then in the very next chapter He is saying don't do this. Jesus is not crazy. He is actually explaining two different things here. In Chapter 5 He is speaking about doing good works so that the result is glory to the Father. In chapter 6 He is warning not to use good works to get attention and praise for yourself. We are going to see here that Jesus is contrasting things back and forth that illustrate hypocrisy. This context is going to be very important in just a minute.

Jesus is now going to take the next several verse to talk about three main Christian disciplines. The discipline of giving, praying, and fasting. These three things are very important to grow spiritually as a Christian. At the same time, they were required law for the Jews. These three disciplines are even seen as standards in the Muslim faith. Jews were really accustomed to giving, praying, and fasting. However, it was a law. It was a work in the Old Covenant. Many

Jews used these disciplines as a way to look holy and righteous in front of people. Many Jews used these disciplines to say they were better than others and elevate themselves to higher positions in society. Then Jesus steps on the scene and elevates the standard. Look what He says in verse 2:

***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.***

Jesus uses the word “hypocrite” in these passages. We know what that means. The dictionary has many definitions of a hypocrite but my favorite is “a person whose behavior contradicts their stated beliefs or feelings.” So for a Christian, we believe in grace, mercy, compassion, love, selflessness, and more. When we do the opposite of these things we are being a hypocrite to what we believe. But this word hypocrite was more dramatic in Jesus’ time. A hypocrite in the first century was a Greek term that meant an actor who wears a mask. One scholar I looked up this week said that all actors in that time were men. So if the play called for a female role the male actor had to wear a mask and pretend to be a woman. Or if there were not enough actors, some would wear several different masks during the play. Essentially, you are pretending to be something that you are not.

One thing I really love about Jesus’ sermon here is that Jesus assumes that we are already doing these disciplines. He doesn’t say, “If you give” or “if you pray.” Jesus says “when” you give or pray. He assumes that we are all doing these fundamental disciplines in our daily lives and is warning us to not be selfish or wrong in our motives.

Have you noticed how many times the word “reward” is used in these few verses? The Greek word for “reward” in verse 1, 2, and 5 is the noun *misthos* which means “wage.” The Greek word for “reward” in verses 4 and 6 is the verb *apodidomi* which means to pay back or give. So when you do something with selfish motives, you get your wage from people and the pat on the back. But when you do things for the Lord unselfishly He *gives* back to you rewards from heaven. One thing we need to understand is that this is a Kingdom principle. When it comes to Kingdom principles the number one thing we must do is always keep it about the King. We will always face the temptation to do Kingdom principles for what the King gives, rather than simply blessing Him.

Another temptation we will face is doing things out of obligation rather than love. Some people will say “all that’s important is doing the good deed not *how* do it.” The truth is that God cares about the motive behind your obedience. The Scripture doesn’t say, “God loves a giver.” It says, “God loves a *cheerful* giver.” In Hosea 6:6 God says, “For I desire mercy rather than sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” Jesus is setting a standard here of a lifestyle of recalibration. For the rest of our lives we will need to consistently check our motives so that all we do for God and for the world is from a good heart.

**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.**

Jesus now transitions to saying one of the most famous portions of Scripture in all history, the Lord’s Prayer. I heard a pastor tell this story of the Lord’s prayer in an NFL locker room. Mike Ditka was about to deliver a locker room pep talk one day. He looked up and saw defensive tackle William “Refrigerator” Perry. How could he not see him? At 338 pounds the Fridge stood out even in a crowd of pro football players. Ditka gestured to the Fridge. “When I get finished,” he said, “I’d like you to close with the Lord’s Prayer.” Then the coach began his talk. Meanwhile, Jim McMahon, the brash and outspoken quarterback, punched John Cassis. “Look at Perry,” McMahon whispered, “he doesn’t know the Lord’s Prayer.” Sure enough, Perry sat with a look of panic on his face, his head in his hands. He was sweating profusely. “Everybody knows the Lord’s Prayer,” said Cassis to McMahon in disbelief. After a few minutes of watching the Refrigerator leaking several gallons of sweat, McMahon nudged Cassis again. “I’ll bet you 50 bucks Fridge doesn’t know the Lord’s Prayer.” As Cassis tells the story, he stops to reflect on the absurdity of it all: “Here we were sitting in chapel and betting 50 bucks on the Lord’s Prayer.” When Coach Ditka finished his pep talk, he asked all the men to remove their caps. Then he nodded at Perry and bowed his head. It was quiet for a few moments before the Fridge spoke in a shaky voice, “Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord, my soul to keep...” Cassis felt the tap on his shoulder. It was Jim McMahon. “Here’s the 50 dollars,” he whispered. “I had no idea Perry knew the Lord’s Prayer.”

**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. – Matthew 6:1-15 NASB1995**

Notice when Jesus shows us how to pray, He begins with “our Father.” Think about how much of a shock that was to the Jewish mind. All through the Old Testament they would t even say the name of God. They took the vowels out. They would call Him by His attributes: El Shaddai or Elohim. They would say “Hashem” which means “the name.” It was always at a distance because of sin. But Jesus was coming to take away the sin of the world. So now we can come boldly before the throne. So intimately that we can call God “our Father.”

Lord’s Prayer:

V9 - Adoration  
V10- submission

V11 - provision  
V12 - confession  
V13 - protection