

SEEN OR UNSEEN

LOOK AT ME!

Today we begin by considering a few passages from Matthew 6.

- Matthew 6:1 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** is in heaven.
 - Have you ever thought about this passage in the midst of doing something good? Has this ever hindered you from helping someone or doing something kind? Let's take a look at following passages.
 - Matthew 6:2-4 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**. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your **Father who sees in secret will reward you**.
 - Matthew 6:5-6 And when you **pray**, you must not be like the **hypocrites**. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and as the street corners, that they may be **seen by others**. Truly, I say to you, they have **received their reward**. 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**.
 - Matthew 6:16-18 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**. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 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**.
- I've highlighted certain phrases in order to see that pattern. What's the real problem? Well, there are many.
 - Such people were hypocrites, i.e. "play-actors". Hypocrites originally referred to Greek actors who wore different masks to play various roles. This concept is strongly felt in the three passages.
 - This teaches that some people will take advantage of every opportunity to look holy. Nothing is off limits. Yes, even in the most tender and holy acts like giving, praying and fasting. Meanwhile, and you didn't notice it, but the widow just dropped a penny in the box. "Oh", Jesus adds, "she gave all she had."
 - Practical issue to those outside: It leaves a bad taste in their mouth. Want to know why so many don't like Christianity? It seems fake. People are watching, by the way, more than you want them to. They see how "Christians" seem to play the part well when others are looking, but sometimes they see you when you don't realize. Instead of actually growing closer to God, such people take advantage of those in need. They're pawns in their spiritual game to make themselves look better. Worse case scenario, the world picks up on it and you represent Christ while they begin to resent Him.
 - Practical issue to those inside: It breeds competition between brethren. It can give the impression that you're really that good. Someone looks at you and thinks: "I've got to be like them" instead of "I want to be more like Christ." Ask yourself that question and be honest: Do my actions lead others towards me or Christ? Do I want others to be like me or Jesus?
 - Could you imagine if how beautiful it would be, to those outside or inside the body, to see us honest when we fail or are weak? I've seen that we struggle to do so. Even when we're showing "weakness", we find a way to do so that somehow preserves our righteousness. Ever noticed that? It's the cliche interview question and answer: "What is one of your greatest weaknesses?" Answer: "I tend to work too hard and care too much about my work."
 - Main issue: Is it that they're doing good things openly, or that they want to be seen? They want a reward from man, rather than God! Man is seeking glory for himself, rather than God. The problem isn't that we have a jealous, insecure, self-centered God who feels real competition with His creation. The problem is that man has genuinely forgotten their position in relation to God. We're not even in the

arena. We have lost our humility. That's the real problem? We're thinking too much of ourselves and it hinders change.

- It may be good to remember:
 - Romans 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.
 - Listen, I'm not oblivious to certain truths. A person can be extremely gifted, and so much so because they put in the time to hone that ability or craft. But then again, who made you with the propensity to do so? And I'm aware (and we need to acknowledge) that not all people are not on total equal standing. For example: was everyone like Moses? Everyone like Abraham? Everyone like Job or Daniel? What's the point of the following example?
 - Ezekiel 14:12-14 "And the word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord God."
 - Having said that, we need to remember what "the Teacher" wrote long ago . . .
 - Ecclesiastes 7:20-22 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.
 - Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, "I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin"?
 - James 3:2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.
- Before we move on, it seems good to acknowledge that if Jesus mentioned it, especially in such a profound and fundamental message, it means that many tend to struggle with this and He finds it to be extremely important and practical.
- Simple question: before acting on anything, ask about the intention.

LOOK AT GOD

Having considered the issue with seeking recognition and praise from men, we don't want to overlook Jesus' expectation. He wants us to shine as lights in a dark world. He literally says He expects others to see our good works, but why?

- Matthew 5:14-16 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
- Let's get something out of the way (though you're probably aware): there is no contradiction between chapter 5 & 6. For example: Jesus teaches against calling your brother a fool. Yet, in the illustration of the two men who build their houses (one on sand the other the rock) He differentiates between a wise and what kind of man? Yes, a foolish man. Just to be clear that Jesus wasn't opposed to calling someone a fool: Matthew 23:17 You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?" So, what's going on here? Motive. That seems to be what He's teaching against in Matthew 5:22.
- So, what's the significance of 5:14-16?
 - We're about helping others. Who's the light supposed to help?
 - The goal is transformation. My oldest brother pointed out something interesting in Matthew 25:31-it is how the humble in Matthew 25 seem to be talking their way out of heaven while the evil are trying to talk their way in.

- We're representing God.
 - 1 Peter 2:12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.
 - John 15:8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.
- Let's not forget. Where did the light in us come from?
 - John 1:1-9. Who is this really about?
 - How wonderful it is to be called into His service - to shine for Him?
 - Matthew 9:9-13. Look at Jesus, because He gave us notice. That's who we're pointing others to, brethren.