



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 6:1-18

KEY POINT(S): God doesn't just care about what we do – He cares about *why* we do it.

FOR LEADERS

- *Preparing through Prayer!* This Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, and this year we'll be preparing our hearts for Easter through some intentional prayer for the next 40 days! The prompts will be available via Realm, our website, Facebook and Instagram, so if you'd like to pray along with us, be sure to encourage your group to visit the website!

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Icebreaker** – “When was the last time that you were ‘absolutely sure’ of something that turned out to be completely wrong?”
- [2] Communities Video** - Watch this week’s Communities video!
- [3]** What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly impactful or eye-opening?

SECRET RIGHTEOUSNESS

Over the past few weeks we’ve seen Jesus teach us what it means to live righteously. This week, in Matthew 6, Jesus shows us that we can do these things in a way that please God, or in a way that totally misses the mark. In the sermon, Ryan reminded us that God cares deeply about what is in our hearts, and that we should be on guard against hypocrisy and double-mindedness.

Ask a Volunteer to read Matthew 6:1

- [1]** In your own words, how would you define what it means to be hypocrite, and why do you think Jesus cares so deeply about hypocrisy?
- [2]** Where have you seen examples of hypocrisy?
- [3]** Why do you think it comes so naturally for us to seek praise and adoration from others? Where have you struggled with this in your own life?
- [4]** A few weeks ago we considered the balance between Jesus says here and what He says about letting our light “so shine before men” in Matthew 5:14-16. What is the difference between these two passages, and how are we to understand these things?
- [5]** In the sermon, Ryan explained how there is nothing ungodly or unspiritual about seeking reward. What is the reward that Jesus wants us to seek? How is that better than the rewards, honor or approval of men?

Leaders: For the past 6 weeks, we have been commenting over and over again about how God looks at the “heart.” (God explains this in 1 Samuel 16:7). It’s exactly this that we need to understand to interpret both passages here. As Ryan said in the sermon, when our sin wants adoration or praise before men, we should simply “shut our mouths.” But, in those moments where our heart is longing for someone to know Jesus, we should open our mouths to speak the truth. If we’re honest, this is something that we all struggle with. We all, in some form or another, want the praise and adoration of those around us, and when we seek these things in the context of our faith, the results

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can be deadly. Jesus is warning us in this passage that we should not let these things sit in our hearts unnoticed.

GIVE, PRAY, FAST

Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 5:2-4, 5-14, and 16-18.

In the sermon, Ryan said that the neglect of private praying and reading God’s Word is the “fast track to religious hypocrisy.” He also went on to note how Jesus doesn’t say, “if you give, if you pray...if you fast, etc.,” but rather, “when” we do these things.

- [6]** In your opinion, why do you think so many Christians have difficulty cultivating a private prayer life, and what does this teach us about our walk with God? In what way(s) have you found this to be challenging in your own walk with Jesus?
- [7]** Why do you think Jesus draws such a strong connection between praying for God’s forgiveness and forgiving others who’ve wronged us? What does it communicate if someone’s willing to receive God’s forgiveness yet not forgive others?
- [8]** Of the three things that Jesus mentions in our passage this week (giving, praying and fasting), which of them are you finding to be the most challenging for you right now? Explain.

Leaders: It’s ironic that so many people want to go “deeper” in their walks with Christ, but if you were to evaluate their daily lives, you’d find a lack of the most basic Christian rhythms – fasting, praying, reading God’s Word, giving, serving, loving, forgiving, praying for our enemies, etc. The answer to having a ridiculously intimate relationship with Jesus is not complicated, but for some reason, it’s also not easy. It’s exactly because of this that we walk in discipleship together, with others to hold us accountable and encourage us and remind us of the Gospel, and grace, and encourage us forward. Be real with this conversation. Be honest, and be forgiving. And then thank God that we have one another, that we have the grace of Jesus, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and the power of God.

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

- [9]** What does a preoccupation with what other people think reveal about our inner spiritual life? What is it revealing about yours?
- [8]** Where are you most challenged from our passage this week?
- [9]** As a church, how can we better hold one another accountable and encourage each other forward in our walks with Jesus?

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that God would reveal areas of hypocrisy in our lives, that we would be honest with Him, with ourselves and with one another.
- [2]** During your prayer time, allow for 30 seconds of silence for everyone to quietly pray for someone, specifically, that they are having difficulty forgiving. Ask for God’s help to bring us to a sincere place of forgiveness.