

Generosity In the Presence of the Father

Matthew 6:1-4

Introduction – All religions deal with how we are to live towards others, towards God, and towards ourselves. Only Christians can talk about living in the presence of the Father in these areas. All other religions have ‘works’ systems to earn a place before God. But we have been adopted and brought ‘home’. In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus teaches children of our heavenly Father how we are to live with regard to our estates, our souls and our bodies. In this first section, we see that false religion looks to men for approval, and Jesus teaches that it remains false even if the only person you are looking to is yourself.

What Is Assumed – “Take heed that you do....” (v1), “Therefore, when you do a charitable deed...” (v2). Notice that Jesus is not saying if, but when. Christians are to be almsgivers. It is to be a natural habit for all of God’s people. The disciples were not the elite or the rich, but mostly came from the class of people that got up each morning and went to work to feed their families. 1 John 3:17 does not simply apply to those above a certain income level, contrary to what our current system of statism teaches. This is an example of ‘modernity’ in economics, and actually discourages a godly concern for the poor. We must seek reformation here as in all areas of culture, responding to the teachings of the Scriptures.

“The wicked borrows and does not repay, but the righteous shows mercy and gives” (Psalm 37:21).

“The righteous considers the cause of the poor” (Prov 29:7).

“Look At Me!!” – What little boys do outwardly and honestly, grown men continue to do, but with well-trained subtlety. Fundraisers work better when you are promised your name ‘on a brick’.

Notice Jesus is not teaching that we are to never do these good works publicly. He is saying that we should not do them for the purpose of being seen. Remember Matt 5:16 in this. The issue is - did you give so they would know?

Not Even Yourself – How can I do things with my right hand that my left hand doesn’t even know is going on? Have you ever taught a child how to tie shoes? Watch a great pianist – how does he do that?

The point is not absentmindedness, or lack of wisdom. For we are required to give lawfully – “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thess 3:10). This also rules out the wicked practice of acts of random kindness.

Godly charity should be as natural as your last breath (Matt 25:31-40). Christ is teaching humility, but not thoughtlessness or absentmindedness.

Godly Reward Seeking – We are to be Christians, not Stoics. It is not super-spiritual to say, “I should do the right thing for its own sake and not with an eye to a reward”. That is not the way God made us. We are created to glorify Him and to enjoy Him. Compassion is a good thing, and rewards are good motivation as scripture teaches:

“He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given.” Prov 19:17

“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:38.

Matt 6:4 seems to teach that it is even proper to seek an ‘open reward’. The issue is not so much the reward, but the rewarder. If you seek the reward of men (including yourself), that is all you get. And that is nothing compared to the rewards given by our good Father.

Generosity in the Presence of the Father –

We are always in the presence and knowledge of the Father. All of our actions and intentions are laid bare before Him and He knows us better than we know ourselves.

Our lives are living sacrifices to Him, not conforming to the world which seeks the approval of itself, not God (Rom 12:1-2).

All giving and charitable deeds are to be done as unto the Lord – “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown *toward His name*, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb 6:10).