



Sermon, Sunday April 3, 2022

“Jesus’ Teachings on Giving, Prayer, and Fasting”

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:1-18 ¹ Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁵ And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever 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. ⁷ When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then in this way: Our Father 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 bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. ¹⁶ And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Introduction: The Lord looks at the heart, not outward appearances

Today's text is Jesus' teachings about giving, praying, and fasting. In Jesus' day, the way Jews showed their piety was to keep the law. So, the Jews showed their piety to others by practicing almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. However, many Jews have reduced these good ways to practice love of the Lord and love to one's neighbor; in favor of hypocritical acts that reveal their feelings of righteousness.

Jesus always warned His disciples and people against such practices. As today's text describes, people try to show their righteousness in the world, but the Lord always focuses on the motives in our hearts.

That is why the Old Testament prophet Joel exclaims, "Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God." (Joel 2:13)

Sometimes my wife says to me, 'I should not have married you just because of your handsome face'. My wife is not comfortable living with me, as I have a rough personality. What I am grateful for is that the Lord of grace has covered my beloved wife's eyes so that she cannot see my harsh personality. Thanks to that, I was



able to marry a bright, thoughtful wife. However, these exceptions do not apply to everyone. So, we must have the wisdom to see the heart, not just appearance.

Today's text lists Jesus' teachings on giving, praying, and fasting in a simple and identical way. Today's text warns people not to reveal their righteousness. It also refers to the rebuke of hypocritical acts of relief and the teachings for sincere relief. Furthermore, it talks about the reproof of hypocrisy in prayer and the teaching for sincere prayer. Finally, it refers to the reproof of wrong fasting and the teaching for right fasting.

Today's text contrasts the actions of man and the Lord. Man wants to reveal his righteousness to the world. But the Lord concentrates on the heart of one soul who looks to the Lord with sincerity. Today's text shows what the church, the body of Jesus Christ, should aim for through the contrasting aspects of man and the Lord. So, what are the three teachings of the Lord shown in today's text?

First, the presence of the Lord is experienced deep within human beings.

Through the text, Jesus tells what kind of place the Lord's Presence is experienced. The text repeatedly says that the Lord sees in secret. When the Lord sees us in secret in this verse, it means that He sees the innocence and holiness toward the Lord deep within us.

The Lord sees our pure and holy hearts and dwells fully in us when we are focused on Him and quieting our hearts from the bustle of the world. In such a situation, we feel His presence and have a deep communion with God. We must not forget that the full presence of the Lord is present in a sincere heart toward the Lord.

For the growth of our faith, there must be a time of secret fellowship with the Lord. Make sure to be available for deep communion with the Lord early in the morning, or late at night, or at any time, and experience the grace of the Lord through that time.

Then, what is the second teaching of the Lord shown in today's text?

Second, the Lord has insight into the deep thoughts of the human heart.

In today's text, the word that the Lord sees us in secret has another meaning. It means that the Lord sees our hidden thoughts. In other words, the Lord knows our own secrets that are not revealed to the world. Thus, the Lord knows not only the holy state of mind in which we experience His presence, but also the hidden thoughts within us.

So, Hebrews 4:12-13 says: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

Sometimes when I watch movies, I see people with supernatural abilities who can read people's hearts. However, if you read people's minds, you will experience much more disappointment than good. We are fortunate that this does not happen in our reality, but the Lord sees all of us. So, we should fear the Lord and confess our gratitude to the Lord for redeeming us by grace despite our many sins and weaknesses.

Then, what is the third teaching of the Lord shown in today's text?

Third, the Lord will come again as the Judge of the world.

Finally, today's text clearly states that the Lord is the Ruler and Judge of the world. Our life is not our own, but the Lord has entrusted it to us for a while. But fools think that we are in control of our lives, not the Lord.

Also, many people in the world accuse Christians of being very weak and not independent of their dependence on the Lord. But the life of relying on the Lord is not because we lack the will, confidence, vision,



and ability for our lives. Rather, on the contrary, it is possible because in the Lord we have found a certain will, conviction, vision, and ability for our lives.

The Lord does not treat us like slaves or servants, but He cares for us and guides us like a loving child. So, I hope that we will have the wisdom and grace to live the life that the Lord has entrusted to us, but not cling to the world. Also, do not forget that we are strangers on our way to our hometown of heaven. I hope that we all make many happy memories in the life of a stranger, who comes and goes for a while.

Conclusion: Think of Christ who reconciled us to God.

Now let's summarize today's sermon. The Lord sees in secret our pure and holy hearts and is fully present in them. The Lord is also the One who sees the thoughts of our deep heart. Therefore, we must live our lives in the truth, not in hypocrisy before the Lord. Finally, the Lord returns to us as Judge of the world. Therefore, we should not be clinging to the world, but should be able to be free from the world a little more.

So, how can we apply the teachings the Lord has given us today in our lives? **First**, we must always be on the lookout for hypocrisy in our religious life. **Second**, we must examine the motives of our hearts before the Lord. And if there is anything to repent of, you must repent. **Third**, we need to consider whether the kingdom of God we desire is to seek the Lord's will first or the satisfaction of our selfish life.

Please do not forget. Jesus died for us as sinners. However, the reconciliation between us and God through the death of Jesus on the cross is the foundation for us to change and reconcile our relationship with our neighbors. I hope that the broken relationship will be restored through the teachings of Jesus today.

