

Jan 31, 1971 P.M. WXB

TESTING YOUR DEEDS

Matt. 6:1-7

Our consideration is the sermon on the mount and we continue through the matter of inwardness and the new motive in religious deeds. The beginning of Chapter 6 we have a word of warning. ("Take heed") - lurking in our path there is the ever-emphatic earnestness that he is no alarmist but he wants them to listen to him reverently as he talks to them about their deeds and their prayer and their fasting.

(Three little boys) were talking. One said, "My daddy is ~~is~~ a lawyer, and I can get my legal advice for nothing." And another said, "Well, my daddy is a doctor, and I can get my medicine for nothing." The third said, "My daddy is a preacher, and I can be good for nothing."

Now, this evening, I want to talk to you about the matter of rewards
How can he good for something -
in the Christian life and what does the Bible say about Christian

sacrifice and service. We have already discovered the kind of life

in which we are not to retaliate and we come now to what some of the

people ~~thought~~ thought in that day about the three great ~~virtues~~ virtues in

religious
the ~~Christian~~ life - alms giving, prayer, and fasting. Is there ~~is~~ any

profit in giving money? Is there any profit in praying? Is there any

profit in the discipline of fasting? Jesus would answer "Yes" there is

tremendous personal profit in serving Jesus. Whoever gives a cup of cold water in his name shall be rewarded for it. In the final judgment, he said all people would be rewarded or punished according to the ways which they used their lives.

Now this matter involves the faithful contributor and the faithful worker in a church. The money you give could be used for something else. The time you spend at church could be ~~not~~ devoted to personal pleasures. Let me assure you that you are not wasting your time nor your money that you give to your church and to your Lord. God will reward you for serving him.

Now, the way that you will be rewarded for your service and for your money will be on the basis of your motive, in the eyes of God and your fellowman. We must serve without any thought of reward.

I. Alms-giving, V. 1-4

V. 1 - "Take heed that you do not your alms" - this would be better translated, "that you do not your (righteousness)" - "before men to be seen of them." Otherwise you have no reward of your father.

Alms in V. 1 is righteousness or religious deeds in general. Now, take heed to hold this in your mind in reference to the matter of your deeds. That we are going to do good is assumed, for vital Christianity is impossible

without service and without doing something.

The man who lost both himself and his talent in the Bible - it was not that he had misused his talent, but because he had not used it at all.

* The heart that was cleansed of evil and became seven-fold worse than it had ever been before was not because it had rushed into sin, but because there was emptiness in life.

The fig tree that bore nothing but leaves was blasted. Now, if we take for granted that every Christian will be a worker, he will want to serve and he will want to do good for his Lord.

And what he is setting out here is the real motive test. He said when you come to give your alms (before men), well then he says you have no other reward.

The positive quality here is that you are not to do this to be seen of men. ~~When you give~~ This is the word from which we get our ~~xxx~~ "Theater" - a religious show. It is difficult to believe that the Pharisees literally carried on this sort of giving to be seen of men, but this is the picture of the Christian life in this world in the presence of God and in active submission to him. Now ~~xxxx~~ this is a picture of how you going to live, and the thing he emphasizes is that you are going to be living in the presence of

~~xxxx~~ is a greater fallacy than for a man to believe that when he

becomes a Christian all of his problems have vanished and then sorrow. A man will have his snares and his pitfalls and life will be beset by problems as he works out his need in the Kingdom of God for service. The Christian should always be anxious to know himself, not that he may want to commend himself. Now the natural man wants to evade this self-examination, and this is the contrast that Jesus is teaching to the Pharisees and the Scribes - that of Practical Christian living, and he is going to lay down the general principle in these illustrations which he gives. Alms-giving, praying and fasting.

The delicate nature of the Christian life is always a matter of balance. He tells us to let our light shine before him that they may see our good works. And here he says take heed that you do not your righteousness before men just to be seen of them. Now this is not a contradiction. The Christian is to live in such a way that men looking at him and seeing the quality of his life would glorify God, not glorify him. He must also remember at the same time he is not to do things in order that he may attract attention to himself, he must not desire to be seen of men. And therefore, this is a searching question. "Take heed" he says. In other words, you are not to do your alms just before men; that is, you put some of the best goods in the

showcase, in the window, when back in the storeroom you have only junk.

And this is the temptation of religion, to do it for show before men.

✓ V. (2) - he tells us we are tempted to do this (outwardly)

Some do this to acquire a reputation. These men with their rich vestments and their alms and their prayers could not mortify self. But they build up themselves in great reputation ^{with} ~~for~~ their charitable deeds and at the same time they took advantage of others.

Now Judas was one of these people. He had built up so great a reputation that none of his fellow-disciples guessed that he was about to betray his master.

There are others with sincere and transparent motive who begin to serve and love God, but as the days pass, they discover that they are regarded as saints, and they become proud of their position which they have accomplished and of their reputation. And they call attention to self.

Many people tithe faithfully. Now Jesus said they sound a trumpet. Now it is difficult to imagine a man just ~~before~~ before he made an offering to sound a trumpet. Just before he offered a beggar a coin. Many tithed faithfully out of their small salary and never get credit for it publicly. Other people make a sizable gift now and then and in fact it may be well

advertised. The name of the giver may be in the community newspaper, some drive on. As one ~~XXXXXX~~ financial secretary said to a pastor, "Without calling any names that keeping books for the church was a strain ~~on~~ on his faith - in man, not in God."

Now what Christ forbids is not giving publicly but giving to be seen of men. It is the motive that matters, not the manner. A public offering, a public drive for charity or church is not condemned in this passage of scripture.

Hambone once said, "It's bad enough to be what you is, much less try to make out like you is something, what you ain't."

Now, the old play actor was shrewd of putting his best in front and this was to get a reputation for himself. And this was used in the matter of religion.

They were hypocrites. They were interpreters, actors, they were wearing a mask.

Now the hypocrite had his reward. First, the praise from men. Second, he had a constant realization that he really deserved no praise. And third, an ever-present fear that men will find out what he really is.

And fourth, the unpleasant knowledge of future judgment, which will reveal the true state of all men.

When hypocrites act their part that they may have glory of men, they get precisely what they wanted and no more. The Jews were trained from the earliest days to be merciful and charitable. According to the laws of Moses, they were to be liberal to the poor, and this was reckoned as a part of religious duty toward God. The prophets never forgot to urge the people to give bread to the hungry. There were a row of alms boxes which stood in the temple courts to receive the offerings of the worshippers. And appointed officers collected money for the poor of the town, but in our Lord's time men gave their money to secure merit with God and admiration from men. They displayed their charity at the doors of the synagogue where beggars congregated and all who passed by could see.

Mrs. Judson in her account of the first Burma convert says, "A few days ago I was reading with him the sermon on ~~the~~ the mount; he was deeply impressed and unusually solemn. 'These words' said he 'take hold of my very heart. They make me tremble. Here, God commands us to do ~~w~~ everything in secret not to be seen of men. How unlike our religion this is.'" For in his native land when they made an offering, they made a great noise with musical instruments that

others may see how good they are, but this religion makes the mind fear God.

This is the dedicated nature of the Christian, and he does not say now that the Christian is going to go into hiding, but he has an ultimate choice. He is always going to make a choice to please God, and thinking about himself and other people will be second.

The supreme matter is to realize his relationship to God. Our Lord put it like this: "We should realize that our supreme object in life should be to please God - please him in everything, in his whole life. He is to remember that he is always in the presence of God." "Thou God ~~seest~~ seest me." He sees our hearts. ~~Other people~~ He knows our hearts. Other people do not. Now, you can deceive them. You can persuade them. But God knows your heart.

V. 3 - There he says something about your left hand. Now, you may justify yourself before men, but God knows what's on the inside. There is a better way of living, and there is a holier way throughout the whole of this day. Jesus was saying the Christian ought to do everything and make an attempt to do this as though it was done under the eyes of God. That's what the psalmist meant. "Whither shall I flee ~~from~~ from thy presence?" He knew that he ~~was~~ was in the presence of God.

V. 4 - He talks about doing this in secret and getting a reward. They

... liability means "they have received payment in full"

Now this is a commercial word as ~~xxx~~ though you mark a receipt when payment is made in full. Now Jesus said when your alms-giving is important, you must practice it, but don't give it as a display. But when your father ~~xxx~~ sees you in secret he ~~xx~~ is going to reward you in full - openly. Now the reward that they had sought as ~~xxx~~ before men, they had already received it. They had been paid in full.

This is a most fascinating passage of scripture as he talks about ~~the~~ the kingdom person, the kingdom man, the Christian. "Take heed that you do your righteousness not before men." God is thought of as a righteous God and what he had been doing for these people was in the way of righteousness - he delivered them from Egypt, he delivered them from slavery, he delivered them from evil, and when a Christian comes to relate to this he is to do his ~~righteous~~ righteousness with a proper motive.

Now this alms-giving is not restricted to just the handling of our money, giving out of our goods, but it is also our deeds of mercy and ~~kindness~~ kindness. So it has a meaning of doing merciful things. When you do these things to your fellow man because of your mercy - sometimes giving = sometimes where help is needed you offer help, where someone is suffering you share with him. I think you get the general idea of this. Therefore, you do not make a

noise, sound a horn, as the ~~xxx~~ hypocrites do. If you do that, what then is your motive? What will you get out of that? You have a receipt and it is paid in full by man.

And he said your ~~xx~~ reward will come. God will reward you in the open. But I think the greatest reward that God's people will receive will be the reward that God will give.

Now ~~once~~ in a while somebody comes along and they will shake hands with you and they will press some money in your hand. Now perhaps they are saying they don't want the left hand to know what the right hand is doing. Maybe they take this literally. But the example that Jesus is pleading for is the right motive. And do this - be an example in this way - and you will be doing what Jesus is here instructing you to do in the matter of giving with divine approval.

Alms-giving really stood high on the list. Now I think this left hand proposition is really a call for humility and honesty and modesty. Some people think that purposing ^{prestigious} the Christian grace here that they do not get credit. But that is false because he said that God is going to reward you. **First** God is going to judge these hypocrites. And he is going to reward those that he sees in secret.

There is just one hair breadth from Christianity to the Pharisees.
 There is just one small pin in between. That of having the right motive
 and that of loving the chief seat in the synagogue.

I believe that men should be concerned about the matter of rewards
 today, as we interpret Jesus and his teaching. The right hand knows not what
 the left hand is going to do. Incidentally, when you figure the amount of
some gifts that are given to the church, that really makes sense. I would not
want my left hand to see the small gift in my right hand either. But Jesus is
not talking about church finances. He was forbidding a public show, whether
 it was small or great. He started off you remember the sermon "Blessed are
those that are pure in their hearts." Now every man's work shall be judged
 whether it be of wood or hay or stubble or silver or gold. All our works
are going to be judged. We must all appear. We should be interested therefore
in the matter of rewards. There is nothing wrong with it as long as the desire
 in the reward is holy. There is no reward from God for those who seek it from
 men. Now this is a terrifying thought. Those who do their righteousness just
before men, you will have nothing whatever of God. If I am concerned just to
preach the gospel in line of what people will think of my preaching, well, that
 will be all that I get out of it, and nothing from God. Seeking a reward from

men, you get that. Hence, Jesus had said, the wrong way to perform your deeds is to announce it with a trumpet, to draw attention. And of course there are people who believe in making a great show on the number of converts or this or that in the church. But when we truly come to examine our hearts, we find that even that may be a very subtle way of doing what the Pharisees were doing. They wanted the praise of people. How wonderful, how marvelous, terrific isn't it? They get their reward, they get their praise, they get their names in the headlines. A great number of people write about them, people talk about them. They get all of that. Now, if that is what they want. That is what they have got. And they really are to be (pitied).

Now, Jesus said there is a right way to go about this. That they may be done in secret. Do not announce this to others, he said, it will be very obvious as to what you are doing. Do not even announce it to yourself. It is so difficult for some ^{not} people/to announce it to others that they think this is an element of decency. What is so difficult is not to have pride in ourselves. "I thank God I am not like that." And when we say that, we become a Pharisee. We sound a trumpet. ~~Waxx~~ You don't even announce what you are going to do that your left hand must not know what your~~x~~ right hand is doing. In other words, you try to keep the spiritual ledgers.

Do things as you are moved by God, and led by the Holy Spirit, and not as what you think will be glorious for you. What fools we are sometimes in keeping our accounts. Nothing we have done will be forgotten for Jesus said "when I was in prison, you visited me. When I was thirsty, you gave me to drink." When you go about doing your alms, ministering to the sick and the suffering, and your deeds of mercy, remember to do them in the spirit he directs.

II. The matter of prayer - how to pray. V. 5-7

This within itself is a sermon, but it centers upon the same idea of which we have been speaking already.

V. 5 he talks about those standing in the synagogue and standing on the wide street corners praying that they may be seen of men. Now, prayer was another thing that the Jews practiced with great fervor. There were prescribed prayers for every occasion, before and after meals. The sight of the sea, lake and river; receiving good news; the use of new furniture; entering or leaving a city. There were fixed hours of prayer, the third, the sixth, and the ninth. Nine o'clock in the morning, twelve noon, three o'clock in the afternoon. Wherever a man happened to be at these times, he was bound to stop and pray.

We ought to have a prayer in our hearts and gratitude to God throughout all the day, but this became a matter of ritual, and their prayers had a tendency to become meaningless. It was for pious display in the synagogue meant when they were come together in the proper place of devotion.

This covered both private and public prayers. The congregational prayer can never take the place of the individual prayer, and the radio, the T-V worship can never fully replace public worship for the able-bodied. Those who are able to go and assemble ~~themselves~~ themselves in the church. It is something that every Christian needs to do every Sunday, is to go and to be in the congregation at the hour or worship, to listen to God's message.

The Pharisees erred in the matter of prayer. The doors of the synagogue were open and they were there. They perhaps some of them deliberately left their homes with the intention and the purpose of being seen in the public place of prayer. They took care that at the proper hours of care they were overtaken on the street corners that they might be viewed by all who passed by them.

Now, Jesus said when you pray do not pray as these men. They pray to men. He is trying to get them to pray to God. And the tendency perhaps is a terrible sin of the human soul, and sin which follows here ~~is pictured~~ the

scripture teaches us. It is that we ought to take heed the terrible nature in a man's heart. Our hopelessness and helplessness in the false way of praying. There must be a true way of praying. The trouble with the false is that it concentrates itself and its attention to become sin he says. You remember the two men who went to the temple to pray. The publican stodd afar off. The Pharisee stood in the foremost place.

Now, the reason they prayed on the street corner was something like this. A man on his way to the temple to pray was anxious to give an impression, and so he cannot wait until he gets to the temple. He must begin praying on the street.

✓ V. 6 - praying in secret. He says we ought to enter our closets and pray there. Now the Pharisees erred. They would pray standing, or as in Luke 18:11, they would pray kneeling. Acts 7:60, they would pray prostrate on their face. Matt. 26:39, they would pray sitting down. And so here is a matter of prayer. They were praying to be seen of men, to make an impression, to get ~~out~~ at an intersection.

And V. 6 tells us that we ought to enter into a closet. Now this is a contrast that helps you to see. Don't miss the opportunity to see the difference between the followers of Jesus and the Pharisees. The secret closet is an aid to

sincerity in prayer. It is private. It is shutting out distractions. It implies that you have an urgent task. You want to get away from the noise and the competition of business, with no one else around to see you. No human eye to nod approval. Then you can pray to your father.

I think an excellent illustration of this would be a person in a telephone booth trying to carry on a long distance conversation with the door open and other people standing outside talking. The person would say "I can't hear you." And she was repeating loudly for the other person on the other end of the line to repeat it. Then some thoughtful by-stander gently closes the door. And both conversations may be continued - the one in the telephone booth and the one on the outside. This is the thing that happens Jesus said when you come into the closet. ~~XXXXXX~~ The world must be shut out, and you then will be able to pray in private. I don't know that this is a literal closet he is talking about, but in general, I think he means that you are praying to God because some people pray as a newspaper reported of a prayer that was made in Boston. He said it was the most eloquent prayer ever addressed to a Boston audience. Now, such a prayer is heard by men.

So Jesus is urging us to enter the closet.

✓ V.17 Vain repetition, lengthy prayers. This ^{Practice} is still with us at this

time. I read about an old gentlemen having his Thanksgiving dinner. He said the prayer before the meal. He ~~prayed~~ prayed about every event in American history from the landing of the pilgrims at Plymouth rock to the present administration. And when finally he said Amen one of the little grandchildren at the table said, "Please pass the dessert."

Now Jesus was talking about the ^{Heathen} people who were saying the same thing over and over again like a machine, the ~~same~~ same words they were praying, and they were praying to be heard of men, as the newspaper reported about the beautiful which was offered to the Boston congregation. We must be careful that our prayers are offered not to a class or a congregation, that we will get reward from them, be paid in full as Jesus has said. In prayer we could turn to the ~~psalms~~ psalms. They have some excellent examples on praise petitions, sufferings, repentance, and assurance, and security. Now we may doubt the wisdom of citing these psalms as a substitute for prayer.

Or even taking the so-called Lord's prayer as an example and praying it over and over again.

Many of us seldom really pray. To seek God's face, to have ~~one's~~ one's heart before him, to detach one's self from the world.

long winded Preacher, praying at a funeral - one man remarked
we are not going to get to the cemetery in time for the Resurrection."

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Mohammedans sometimes pray repeating the expression, "God is God" several thousand times after a funeral. Buddhists have been known to put a written prayer on a wheel and count it one prayer for every revolution of the wheel. Other followers may say so many "Hail Marys". Other protestant prayers may be in the terms of "Our Fathers" over and over.

I have even read of the account of some fellow who ~~tacked~~ tacked his ~~prayer~~ prayer on the ~~bed~~ bedpost, and each night he would say, ~~XM~~ "There it is Lord," Now God does not answer because of the number of times we repeat a certain prayer. But he is trying to get us to see that there was a trouble and a danger that they were interested in themselves ~~xxx~~ as they prayed, anxious for their own reputations and respect. They were desirous to be seen of others as they prayed, and they would parade themselves in prominent places. And the trouble was they were trying to give an impression that they could not wait until they got to the temple, and that is why Jesus pressed down on the matter of praying in secret. Anything that is unusual calls attention to itself. Standing on a street corner, would call attention to a man. Beating on a tambourine would call attention to an individual. Praying should be with the intent upon God and centered upon him. Far from desiring people to thank us for our so-called beautiful prayers. We have many popular prayers that are ~~xxx~~ in writing which

people can repeat. But the Lord said about this matter, "Verily, they have their reward." So there is a difference between the true way and the wrong way. (Now, it is, to be sure true; you can pray and approach God at any time, at any place. Now, fortunately our Lord gives ~~xxx~~ us instruction on this in this chapter. "When thou prayest" he says, "enter into thy closet. Close the door." What does this mean? It means that then you are ~~xxxx~~ following a certain principle. You are forgetting other people and you are forgetting yourself. Nobody knows what you are ~~xx~~ doing and you are in your chamber. And the realization is that you have excluded all except the presence of God.

And something else is taking place. You have much more confidence. You have confidence in your heart, *like a little child* and the result of this is going to be that your Lord is going to reward you openly as you pray. You are not praying for the sake of informing God or telling Jesus what you want him to remember. This opens up a very fountain of life. It helps us to see our motive. Judas, when he kissed Jesus, what kind of motive did he have behind it? How about your motives?

✓ Do you ~~xxxxxxxx~~ do your good deeds when men fail to applaud you?

Do you continue to work for a committee when you are no longer chairman and

somebody else takes your place? Do you attend church just as long as somebody

warmly greets you and seems to be glad to see you? Or do you quit and pass the services up? In such a case, I think we had better beware if our eyes are upon men more than upon God, then there must be some darkness. Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, what does it profiteth me?

Now let me kind of summarize some of this. Don't misunderstand, Jesus is not saying to do your alms and your deeds of mercy and your praying in complete hiding all the time because if you did, you would never do them. It may be that no one will ever see them. We are talking about your purpose, what is behind it? You motive? Why are you charitable?

I wonder what would happen if the Christians in the southland would begin to pray - the Baptists, the Methodists, the Presbyterians. Supposed we would pray, ~~They will be done.~~ "Thy will be done." In Jerusalem when they prayed this way, something happened. *what is the matter without prayer* James said we may be praying amiss and we do not ask for the right things. Brethren, have you ever been afraid to pray certain things? If your prayers were answered, would they knock you off your feet and surprise you? The early Christians were surprised when Peter got loose. They could not believe that their prayers had been answered. They had been praying for him. They had been praying for his

release, but there was a knock at the door, and a voice said "Let me in,"
 and it scared them to death. They thought it was a ghost. Tapping at
 the door.

Now, we need not to expect an answer if we are going to pray as
the Pharisees. But the thing that Jesus is talking about is when you
 pray, pray in connection with the (kingdom of God). Everything I pray for
should be in connection with his kingdom.

Cure

1- Shut your self up with God V 4, 5, 6
Get in secret

2. depend upon God to Reward 4, 6
Nothing to worry about - He will