

**Live Like Christ: The Sermon on the Mount**  
**Session 5: Hidden Righteousness (Matthew 6:1-18)**

**“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 who is in heaven.**

**<sup>2</sup>“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. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

- We’re called to be perfect – often that tempts us to let others know how perfect we are!
- Bonhoeffer, “We are therefore confronted with a paradox. Our activity must be visible, but never be done for the sake of making it visible. ‘Let your light so shine before men’ (5.16) and yet: Take care that you hide it! There is a pointed contrast between chapters 5 and 6. That which is visible must also be hidden. The awareness on which Jesus insists is intended to prevent us from reflecting on our extraordinary position.”
- Verse 1 is the key to this whole session. When you do good, who’s your audience, God or people?
- If we’re doing good just for appearances and applause, God is not honored and He won’t reward it.
- That includes doing things just to make ourselves proud of ourselves as being extra-spiritual.
- This is easiest if you just keep your eyes on Jesus as you obey Him!

**<sup>5</sup>“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup>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.**

**<sup>7</sup>“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup>Pray then like this:**

**“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

**<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread,**

**<sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

**<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <sup>15</sup>but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

- Likewise our prayers aren't meant to be done like actors putting on a show.
- This doesn't mean to never pray in public: Jesus and the church in Acts prayed in public.
- We just don't need to be repetitive, showy, or dramatic
- Bonhoeffer, "We are privileged to know that he knows our needs before we ask him. This is what gives Christian prayer its boundless confidence and its joyous certainty. It matters little what form of prayer we adopt or how many words we use, what matters is the faith which lays hold on God and touches the heart of the Father who knew us long before we came to him."
- Bonhoeffer, "God's name, God's kingdom, God's will must be the primary object of Christian prayer. Of course it is not as if God needed our prayers, but they are a means by which the disciples become partakers in the heavenly treasure for which they pray."
- We must forgive others or we haven't really embraced the forgiveness of Christ.

**<sup>16</sup> "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. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> 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.**

- Self-discipline had turned into self-righteousness – rather than fasting to draw humbly nearer to God, people were fasting to show off their spirituality.
- When you fast, don't do it in a way that tells the world, "Hey, look at me, I'm fasting!"
- God sees and rewards! Trust Him!
- The righteousness of Matthew 5 must be done in a way that doesn't turn into showy self-righteousness.