

Coach House Church

BEACONS

GOODNESS AND CHARITY UNMENTIONED

26TH FEBRUARY 2021

Today, let us talk about Matthew 6:1-4. This passage is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where we are still in the earlier sections of the sermon. Prior to the passage, Jesus had given an introduction on the Beatitudes, describing the character of those who declare to follow after Him, as well as clarifications into the true meaning of the Mosaic law.

Now, Jesus provides warnings and reminders against common attitudes when doing good to please God. Let us first read the passage in Matthew 6:1-4:

"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

This passage clearly speaks against doing righteous acts for improving one's personal image. This is counterintuitive to our instincts as modern-day humans. This might seem to speak against certain job roles and current responsibilities, where the entire point of us getting paid by our employers might be acting as a representative good person, the shining image of humanity. Good deeds today are often accompanied by a few pictures taken for posterity.

Now, we will not say that there is something wrong with taking a few pictures to record charitable acts to share amongst friends, followers, or shareholders. After all, there can be legitimate interests for doing so. However, let us not feed

into the lie that our Father in heaven actually approves of us cultivating an image of righteousness.

Before God, who is always wise and aware of our inner intentions, what good is cultivating an image of righteousness at any point in our lives when actually carrying out the deed? Absolutely nothing. The skills we are told that are worth at least twice the salary of minimum wage are not worth mentioning before God.

In the previous chapter, Matthew 5:16, Jesus commands to let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Yes, we may be seen doing good work before men, but let us be very clear on one point. If we truly act in righteousness, following the command of the Christian lifestyle, God will not commend any actions where the results point back to you personally as the final recipient of vainglorious applause. If we consider the deed righteous, please carry it out without a parade, in honour of the all-seeing God.

There is no contradiction, and a clear differentiation is always made when we carry out a good deed, whether consciously or subconsciously. This differentiation is our primary motivation, separating personal, communal, and godly interests. In exceptional circumstances, there may be overlaps. But exceptional circumstances are not part of daily routine. What you do to glorify yourself or your career, perhaps your employer, despite the good you do, will not be taken as glorifying God.

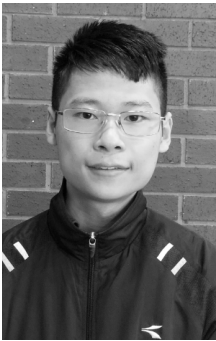
There will not be any heavenly reward in communal or self-indulgence. This passage is Jesus' warning to us. Going public with our good deeds, so that all may know of our generosity, is considered to be raising awareness these days.

Very good. If going public is to be a righteous act, never should we even think about blowing our own trumpet, but all glory, truly, be to God.

There may be uncomfortable feelings brewing in our hearts at Jesus' warnings, feelings of injustice over being unable to explain the great part we do in practising goodness. But Christianity commits to a quiet life filled with profound actions.

What our left hand commits to as good does not need to be made known to our right. We do great deeds, trusting and knowing that our actions are recorded by the gaze of the heavenly Creator rather than common man. We are assured that charity done unmentioned and in secret is pleasing to God.

If there is honour set aside for these secret acts of goodness, then, good, this shall be honoured by our Father in heaven in the best time possible. If there is no special honour set aside for the deed, then it is just as good, as we know that this is only naturally glorifying God, in the state where it all should be. These are the lessons we can take from Matthew 6:1-4.



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