

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 6 (PART 1)

MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-18

V. 2 - FIRST USAGE OF THE WORD "HYPOCRITE" IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT & MATTHEW'S GOSPEL. IT IS A GREEK WORD WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY USED IN THEATER TO DESCRIBE ACTORS WHO PLAYED VARIOUS ROLES BY WEARING MASKS.

HUMANS ARE MOTIVATED BY REWARD. THIS IN AND OF ITSELF IS NOT A BAD THING. YOU WORK HARD TO GET A PROMOTION. YOU TRAIN TO FINISH A RACE. YOU TAKE CLASSES TO IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS. JESUS IS CHALLENGING US TO CONSIDER THE DIFFERENT REWARDS WE ARE MOTIVATED BY.

THE "HYPOCRITES" ARE DOING GOOD DEEDS AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICES WITH A MOTIVATION OF BEING NOTICED, THANKED, OR RECOGNIZED RATHER THAN PURELY TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE, GROW WITH GOD OR HONOR HIM. JESUS HIGHLIGHTS THREE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES WHICH ARE VERY IMPORTANT FOR HIS FOLLOWERS. THERE IS A PATTERN IN JESUS' TEACHING ON THIS - DON'T BE LIKE **HYPOCRITES** (WHO WANT TO BE NOTICED), INSTEAD DO THINGS **SECRETLY**, AND THE **REWARD** ASSOCIATED WITH EITHER APPROACH.

V. 2-4 - GIVING TO THE POOR

V. 5-6 (6-15) - PRAYER

V. 16-18 - FASTING

THERE IS REWARD TO ALL OF THESE THINGS - THE REWARD WE OUGHT TO BE STRIVING FOR IS THE REWARD THAT COMES FROM OUR FATHER. THE REWARDS HE GIVES ARE OFTEN GIVEN IN SECRET - BUT THOSE ARE THE BEST REWARDS. DO YOU FEEL THAT WAY?

Q - WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "PRACTICE" RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Q - HOW DOES ONE PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BE SEEN BY OTHERS?

WE'RE CALLED TO DO GOOD AND RIGHTEOUS THINGS - GOOD DEEDS, CARING FOR OTHERS, PRAYING PUBLICLY AND FOR OTHERS ETC. MATTHEW 5:13-16 CALLS US THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD AND SALT OF THE EARTH. BUT WHO AND WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THOSE DEEDS? JESUS TEACHES HIS APPRENTICES:

MATTHEW 5:16 - LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS, AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.

Q - HOW CAN WE PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN A WAY THAT POINTS TO GOD AND NOT US?

Q - HOW CAN WE DO GOOD DEEDS THAT MAKE GOD LOOK GOOD AND NOT JUST US LOOK GOOD?

SECRECY AND COMMUNITY ARE HELPFUL BAROMETERS IN THIS.

SECRECY: SECRECY AND PRIVATE DEEDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A GREAT PURIFIER OF MOTIVES. HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU DID SOMETHING AND NO ONE EVER KNEW OR FOUND OUT IT WAS YOU? CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING ACTION ITEMS TO HELP YOU GROW IN THIS AREA:

DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE ELSE WITHOUT THEM KNOWING

DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE ELSE WITH TELLING SOMEONE ELSE YOU DID IT.

IF YOU ARE ABLE TO DO THIS WITH PEACE IN YOUR HEART, YOU'RE IN A GOOD PLACE. IF YOU FIND YOURSELF STRUGGLING IN THIS, IT MAY BE BECAUSE THE REWARD OF BEING NOTICED BY PEOPLE HAS A HOLD ON YOUR HEART.

COMMUNITY: ASK SOMEONE IN YOUR CHURCH FAMILY TO HELP YOU ASSESS YOUR NEED FOR RECOGNITION AND TEMPORAL REWARD. ASK THEM ABOUT HOW YOUR PUBLIC ACTS OF DEVOTION COME ACROSS (INCLUDING HOW YOU PRAY). ASK A BROTHER OR SISTER TO HELP YOU ASSESS HOW OFTEN YOU ARE TALKING V. LISTENING TO OTHERS IN A PUBLIC DISCUSSION. ASK SPIRITUAL PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE HOW TO FAST IN A WAY THAT NO ONE KNOWS. HEAR THEIR ANSWERS AND DON'T BE QUICK TO RESPOND OR BE DEFENSIVE BUT RATHER TAKE THEIR PERSPECTIVE TO THE LORD IN PRAYER.

THIS SECTION SPEAKS OF A LIFE THAT IS LIVED BY FAITH, FOR IT IS ROOTED IN THE BELIEF THAT YOUR FATHER SEES YOUR EFFORTS AND THAT YOUR FATHER IS A REWARDER OF THOSE WHO DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM. IT IS FAITH THAT GROWING IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM IS A GREATER REWARD THAN SHORT-LIVED AND TEMPORAL HONOR NOW.