

THE RIGHT MOTIVE FOR GIVING

MATHEW 06:01–04

Introduction – The Right Motive

What a man does matters greatly to God. God expects men to be kind and to do good in the world: to help others both through personal involvement and through giving generously and sacrificially.

But there is something else that God expects, something of critical importance: God expects a man to have *the right motive*. Just why a man does good and shows kindness matters greatly to God. It matters so much that a person's eternal fate is determined by his motive. Because of this, Christ warns us about right and wrong motives.

- I. Acts of righteousness — doing good and giving (v. 1).
- II. The wrong motive: Giving for recognition (v. 2).
- III. The right motive (vv. 3-4).

MATHEW 06:1–18 CHRISTIAN DUTY

Christ discussed the three great duties of religion to a Jew — acts of righteousness (Mt. 6:1-4), prayer (Mt. 6:5-15), and fasting (Mt. 6:16-18). His concern was threefold:

1. That men give, pray, and fast.
2. That men do these works with the *right motive* and *guard against hypocrisy* when doing them.
3. That men receive their *reward* from God the Father. □

I. *Mathew 06:01 Acts of Righteousness*

There are acts of righteousness — doing good and giving to others. The phrase “acts of righteousness” means giving in order to meet the needs of the poor. To the Jew, acts of righteousness and righteousness meant the same thing. Doing righteous acts was the greatest thing a Jew could do; it was the first act of religion. It was considered to be the very embodiment of righteousness, so much so that the two words began to be used synonymously. Giving acts of righteousness merited and assured one of righteousness and salvation.

Christ does not say, “Blessed are the righteous,” for no one is righteous (Rom 3:10). He says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” (Mat 5:6). Man is not righteous, not perfectly righteous. His chance to be righteous is gone. He has already come short and missed the mark. He is already imperfect. Man has but one hope: that God will love him so much that He will somehow *count* him righteous. That is just what God does.

God takes a man's "hunger and thirst for righteousness" and counts that hunger and thirst as righteousness. God does this because He loves man.

Christ warned that there is great danger in giving and doing acts of righteousness. Take heed and guard yourself. Do not give for recognition or you will lose your reward.

Thought 1. There are two important messages in this verse.

- 1) Man must guard and be alert to the deception of giving and doing good before men. A person's heart can be deceived. The sin creeps up on man; it is insidious and subtle. It will keep a person from receiving anything from God.
- 2) A person must do righteous acts, do good. It is the duty of a Christian. In this passage alone Christ says four times, "Do your acts of righteousness."

II. *Mathew 06:02 The Wrong Motive*

There is the wrong motive for doing good. Christ takes for granted that the believer gives and does good. What Christ strikes at is the motive of the human heart for giving and doing good.

1. Giving for recognition is the wrong motive for giving. Recognition is said to be sought by blowing one's own horn in two places: (a) in the synagogue before religious people, and (b) in the streets before the public.

Thought 1. There are several wrong motives for giving and doing good.

- 1) A person may give for recognition and prestige: to be praised by men during life and to be remembered by men after death. A person may desire the applause of men – their thanks and appreciation, honour and praise, esteem and glory.
- 2) A person may give for self-admiration, self-satisfaction and self-applause: to feel comfortable with what he has done and to see himself at his very best. He may wish to boost his ego and to glory in himself.
- 3) A person may give out of obligation: to fulfil his sense of duty.
- 4) A person may give to secure the recognition of God: to feel that God is pleased and favours him because he has done good.

Thought 2. It is not always wrong to do acts of righteousness when men see us. This cannot always be helped. It is wrong to do acts of righteousness *so that* men may see us.

Thought 3. The point is not that a person should hold back from doing good, but he should guard against how he gives and does good.

Mat 23:5 "Everything they do is done for men to see. They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long."

Luke 20:46 “Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets.”

2. Giving for recognition is characteristic of hypocrites. Giving out of the wrong motive is hypocritical. The word *hypocrite* (hupokrites) means an actor who puts on a show, who plays a part on stage; a mask, a fake picture; appearing to be something one is not.
 - a. It is *sounding a trumpet before oneself* (v. 2): blowing one’s own horn for self praise.
 - b. It is *sounding a trumpet in the synagogue*: blowing one’s own horn in the church and before the religious; it is seeking the praise of the religious (v. 2).
 - c. It is *sounding a trumpet in the streets*: blowing one’s own horn before the public, seeking the praise of the public (v. 2).

Mat 23:12 “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

John 5:44 “How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?”

Prov 17:9 He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

Prov 25:27 It is not good to eat too much honey, nor is it honourable to seek one’s own honour.

Oba 1:4 “Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD.

3. Giving for recognition is rewarded on this earth only. A person receives the recognition of men only. There are two rewards for a wrong motive: the recognition of men and temporary self-satisfaction. Note the words, “They have received their reward in full.” This is an accounting statement: it means just what it says — payment has been made in full. One has received his payment and reward; he has received all he will ever receive. There is to be no reward — no reward whatsoever — from God.

Thought 1. The person who gives out of a wrong motive fails in several points.

- 1) He fails to give “of himself”. He gives money and he gives things, but he calculates exactly what he can give in order to meet the need. He never becomes personally involved. He never gives of himself.
- 2) He seldom puts the need or the needy person first. Satisfying his own motive and having his own need met is put first.

- 3) He is always hurt, disappointed, unhappy and sometimes even angry if his giving is not recognized and praised.
- 4) He is never permanently satisfied with what has been done. Why? Because Christ and the genuine giving of himself is the only permanent satisfaction for the human heart.
- 5) He has accepted the recognition that lasts only briefly. The prestige and honour, thanks and praise of men is only temporary.
 - a) The man who gives in this life soon fades in the memory of men. His giving fades into the background. Men move on to other things.
 - b) Once gone, the man who gave in this life knows nothing of the thoughts and words spoken on his behalf. He stands only before God, accountable to Him alone.

Thought 2. Three things can be said about the person who chooses man's reward over God's reward: (1) he has chosen the poorest reward; (2) he has cheated himself; and (3) he can expect no more. What a terrible fate! To have no more reward than what this world offers. Imagine! No hope and no expectation of a better future - nothing beyond this world.

1 Pet 1:24 For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall."

Psa 49:12 But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish.

Psa 49:17 For he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendour will not descend with him.

Isa 5:14 Therefore the grave enlarges its appetite and opens its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revelers.

Hosea 4:7 The more the priests increased, the more they sinned against me; they exchanged their Glory for something disgraceful.

III. Mathew 06:03–04 The Right Motive

What is the right motive for doing good and for giving? "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." What a descriptive way to say it!

1. Give unconsciously. Pay no attention to what you are giving and doing. Do it out of an inner compulsion to give and help, out of intense love, out of genuine concern. Keep your mind on the need, not on what you are doing and the benefits you may receive. Do not harbour such self-centered thoughts. Just love and care and be concerned as you give and do good.

2. Give secretly, quietly, privately. Do not let others know what you are giving and doing. Keep it quiet — say nothing. Keep a low profile: stay out of the centre ring of applause; avoid recognition if possible. Fleeing recognition is critical. The other members of a person's body — his hand, that is, his family — must not even know.

What is so desperately needed is a realistic view of the world. The world is a place of pain and suffering and sin and death — a world that needs to be saved and brought somehow to a state of incorruption. When a person faces the real truth of the world, he forgets himself and sets out to meet the needs of the world through the power of Christ. There is just no time for becoming entangled in the affairs of this world and seeking the applause of men. There is only time to minister. Taking time to applaud one another means there is another need that is going to be unmet.

There is only one right motive for giving and doing acts of righteousness: to help those in need.

=> A person knows and lives with an awareness of the misery, misfortune, and desperate plight of the world.

=> A person loves and cares so much that he *wishes* to help those who need help.

=> A person literally *throws himself* into meeting the needs of the world and helping all he can.

Thought 1. There are three forceful lessons in this point.

- 1) A person is to be immersed in God and in the needs of the world. There is no time for centring attention upon himself if he wishes his life to be focused on God and to be spent saving his world.
- 2) There is only one way the needs of the world will be met: we must all get out into the world where the needs are. There is no time for the right hand to be explaining and receiving applause from the left hand.
- 3) The servant of God is to be obsessed with his call and ministry to the world. He does not become entangled with the affairs of this world and the applause of men. He quietly and diligently goes about pouring himself into helping others (2 Tim. 2:4).

Mat 19:21 *Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

Luke 11:41 *"But give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you."*

Luke 19:8 *But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."*

Luke 12:23 “Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.”

Lev 25:35 “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you.”

Deu 15:7 If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother.

Deu 16:17 Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

Prov 31: 20 She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.

There are two reasons for doing good quietly and secretly.

1. God sees in secret. God sees secret giving and secret acts of righteousness or deeds. Nothing passes His attention. He knows the motive and the acts of every man, every single motive and every single act.

Jer 17:10 “I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”

Jer 23:24 “Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD.

Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.

1 Cor 8:3 But the man who loves God is known by God

Thought 1. Note the words “Your Father.” If God is truly a person’s Father, then the person must give and do good just as his Father dictates. *Anything less is disobedience and displeasing.*

2. God rewards openly. Note the words, “[God] will reward you.”
 - a. It is God Himself who will reward a person.
 - b. It is to be an open reward — a reward seen by all. A person is to have a personal moment before God when He shall receive his reward. This is the picture painted by Christ.

Thought 1. The faithful person will be rewarded as a son, not as a servant. *His Father, not his Master, will reward him.*

1 Cor 9:17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.

1 Cor 15:58 *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

2 Cor 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

2 Tim 4:7-8 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

2 John 1:8 *Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.*

Rev 22:12 *“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”*

Psa 19:9,11 *The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous....By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

Psa 58:11 *Then men will say, “Surely the righteous still are rewarded; surely there is a God who judges the earth.”*

Isa 40:10 *See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.*

Isa 62:11 *The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your Saviour comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.’”*

Jer 17:10 *“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”*

Jer 23:24 *Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD. ■*