

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ
SoM, Part 18: Greater Righteousness, Part 6

Last time...love your enemies

Thus far in the Greater Righteousness than the scribes and Pharisees that is needed to enter into the Kingdom of heaven:

Table 2 Greater Righteousness...with others

- Murder
- Adultery
- Divorce
- Oaths
- Vengeance
- Love

This time...Jesus shifts to Table 1 – Greater Righteousness than the scribes and Pharisees in one's relationship with God

Gone is “Ye have heard it said of old”

What remains is “I say unto you”...the direct, Personal teaching of the Lawgiver Himself

He will warn of hypocritical self-righteousness and teach genuine righteousness toward God

v1-2 alms...as the hypocrites:

The 1st Greater Righteousness with God – showing mercy and compassion for the poor

Almsgiving is regarded as an offering brought to God.

According to the Law, wealth is a loan from God, and the rich are commanded to share God's bounties with the poor.

Relief of the needy was provided by the Law

Lev 25:35 help the poor,

Deut 15:7-8 don't harden your heart or shut your hand but open both

Almsgiving became a good deed, possessing, like sacrifice, the power of atoning for man's sins, and redeeming him from calamity and death.

Prov 11:4 was expounded in this sense (letter of law, man's merits)

So Jesus is warning His disciples to be careful...be on constant, vigilant guard...how they show mercy and compassion for the poor

The scribes and Pharisees (with representatives in the audience) are identified by the Son of God as “hypocrites”

- “actors” with masks
- pretenders – appearing different to others than they really are to God
- self-righteous frauds and deceivers
- opposite of the “righteous”...as spoken of in Job (oldest book)
 - hope shall perish (Job 8:13)
 - not come before God (Job 13:16)
 - shall be desolate (Job 15:34)
 - triumph not (Job 20:5)
 - soul taken away by God (Job 27:8)
 - reign not (Job 34:30)
 - heap up wrath to himself (Job 36:13)

Jesus warns His disciples to NOT be compassionate to the poor as the hypocrites:

- before men
 - to be seen in public...in the synagogue or at busy intersections
 - for show
 - for the applause of men
- with ceremonial fanfare for public consumption drawing attention to Self

The Temple "treasury" into which rich and poor cast their gifts consisted of thirteen trumpet-shaped receptacles of brass, so shaped to prevent dishonest people from taking out coins while pretending to cast them in
Deposits could be noisy! (modern day coin machine)

- to appear to be holy and loving in the eyes of others
 - magnifying themselves
 - an ostentatious display of piety
 - patting themselves on the back and invite others to do so also

They have their reward

Reward speaks of the final accounting/judgment of God that

- rewards obedience (love, believe, trust, righteous)
- punishes disobedience (hate, unbelief, distrust, self-righteous)

The reward for the self-righteous is

- based on their personal merit, NOT on the merit of Jesus Christ
- the wage they earned
- awarded at the Great White Throne judgment and the Lake of Fire... the 2nd death (Rev 20:11-15)

The immediate reward of the hypocrites' alms giving: clapping of the audience is their full compensation

They have their reward...now

How long will that last?

How satisfying is any "dose" of lustful self-indulgence?

How effective will that be in the removal of sins when standing before God at the Great White Throne?

What eternal value are acts of self-righteousness?

The Father in heaven has no regard for such self-serving and deceitful public displays where actors steal His glory

Pretending to be holy, the hypocrites are in reality very unholy

Self-deceived, the hypocrites believe they have the same acclaim before God that they do before men

v3-4 in secret:

Genuine righteousness is a stark contrast to the false righteousness of the hypocrites

Mercy and compassion for the poor that is pleasing in the eyes of God is done

- in secret...telling no one, merely following the leading of the Lord and unto the Lord
- privately, not premeditated for public consumption
- anonymously, unnoticed by others
- as our Father – invisible
- self-lessly, motivated by the love of the Father

Showing mercy and compassion for the poor, is an expression of worship of our God

By one's obedience, one was worshipping and loving the Father by loving "the least" of His children (The Father is the God of the poor)

That which is done hidden from the eyes of man is seen clearly in the eyes of the Father, from whom nothing is hidden and there are no secrets

Reward speaks of the final accounting/judgment of God that

- rewards obedience (love, believe, trust, righteous)
- punishes disobedience (hate, unbelief, distrust, self-righteous)

The reward for the righteous believer is

- not based on personal merit but on the merit of Jesus Christ
- greater than anything he could “earn” so it cannot be calculated like a wage
- sonship...the power to become a child of God, the names of whom are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life
- later...in eternity

Mark 10:21 One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

- public...His announcement/presentation

The Father in heaven will reward His children openly at the Judgment seat of Christ (Rom 14:10, 2 Cor 5:10)... a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8) who, in turn, cast all those rewards at the feet of Jesus, who alone is worthy of to receive glory, honor, and praise (Rev 4:10-11)

v5-6 pray:

The 2nd Greater Righteousness with God – prayer

Jesus warns us to not pray as did the hypocrites, who love (phileo, man’s love)

- to be seen and heard of men...in synagogues and at busy intersections
- to gain recognition and publicity for being “so spiritual!”
- pretending to be devout when they are really defiled (self-righteous)

They have their reward – nothing more than the applause of the audience because Self-righteous prayers “come up empty” in heaven

But the disciples of Jesus Christ are to relate/converse with the Father

- privately and personally
- in secret, hidden from the public eye...e.g. in an interior personal storage room with no windows ala Is 26:20
- only God is the audience...and He will reward such prayer

Q: Should we, therefore, not pray in public in our worship gatherings?
Yes, for prayer is an expression of worship
Such prayer must be Spirit-led, not carnal...one Body with one voice
seeking the Father's heart, mind, and will

An effective prayer is not measured by word count but by earnestness and faith

v7-8 vain repetitions:

Jesus goes on to warn us to not pray like the heathen, the Gentiles, and in the
vanity of their mind

- rote (scripted, memorized) prayer
- repeated prayers
- mantras or any other pagan formula in order to be heard

Such babbling is mindless and insincere...and “bounces off the ceiling”,
unheard by the Father

It is also spiritually dangerous because the root of “vain repetitions” is Babylon

- beads or ropes with knots
 - Islam
 - Buddhism
 - Hinduism
 - Sikhism
 - Roman Catholicism
 - the rosary is from the mystics Desert Fathers
 - 6 “Our Father”s
 - 53 “Hail Mary”s
 - Who is being worshipped? The Queen of heaven
 - Anglicans
 - Greek Orthodox Church
 - Russian Orthodox Church
 - Coptic Church (Egyptian Orthodox Church)
- Mantras: word, phrase, formula that is chanted/repeated
 - Buddhism
 - Hinduism
 - Sikhism
 - New Age meditation (yoga)
 - Contemplative prayer in the Emergent Church
 - emptying of the mind to allow God to come in...
 - opening the door for the devil

- printed and read liturgical Books of Prayer
 - Roman Catholicism
 - Protestantism

Those who pray with beads, knotted ropes, mantras, and liturgical words think they are talking with “god”

They are self-deceived babblers, thinking they are earning God’s favor

The Father in heaven pays no attention to the mindless, heartless noise...religion
He desires heart-felt and sincere conversation...relationship

Without the heart, the relationship, prayer is meaningless

Therefore, Jesus teaches His disciples to converse intelligently from the heart, knowing

- The Almighty Who is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last that transcends time and inhabits Eternity
- The Omniscient Who knows our thoughts, motives, and intents before we do
- The Father Who knows the needs of His children

Note: what He knows we need is different than what we want
James 1:6-8 doubting, double-minded
James 4:3-5 ask amiss, for our lust

We need to learn how to pray and we need to be obedient to pray...
another expression of worship

So the Lord teaches us to pray...we will pick that up separately next week
(we will jump ahead to v16-18 and come back to v9-15 next week)

Now...the 3rd Greater Righteousness in our relationship with God

v16-18 fast:

The 3rd Greater Righteousness with God: Fasting

Jesus warns His disciples to not fast like the hypocrites, who

- fasted twice a week, every Monday and every Thursday
- wore sackcloth and ashes
- went unbathed on those days
- covered their faces or looked profoundly remorseful and gloomy...

for

- a “holy” show
- the applause of men
- public consumption

in their conspicuous and religious “worship”

Their reward was limited to their audience

Jesus therefore teaches His disciples to do the exact opposite!

- Look normal
- Dress normal
- Smell clean
- Be joyful
- Reflect the Life of Jesus in us

because fasting is an expression of worship of the loving Father Who knows our needs and forgiven our sins

The Father is our audience, the Audience of One, and He shall reward this Greater Righteousness publically...later

Note: Mark 2:18-20

We fast in His absence, yet having the Blessed Hope of His imminent return

Mercy/compassion for the poor,
prayer,
fasting

are expressions of worship (keep in mind Matt 4:10)

Jesus Christ contrasts:	<u>the hypocrites</u>	<u>genuine disciples</u>
	reward now	reward later
	their merit	Jesus' merit
	seen of men	seen of God
	heard of men	heard of God
	vanity	value
	religious	relational
	worship Self	worship God

1 Sam 16:7 for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance,
but the LORD looketh on the heart.

The Greater Righteousness than the professional religious needed to enter the kingdom of heaven
is purely a matter of the heart...that must be humbled before God

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ aka Christian is NOT

- a religious performance before people
- acting in a make-believe world for the approval of man

Genuine disciples of Jesus Christ are not role players in a drama, a sit-com, a musical,
a “who dunn it”, or a “boy meets girl” love story

Followers of Jesus Christ are

- volunteers in a devoted relationship to the invisible God...He alone is the “audience”
(Col 3:23)
- children living in the Greatest Reality (Matt 24:35) by the grace of God thru faith and
that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, lest anyone should boast

We live humbly, meekly for Later...watching, patiently waiting, occupying as witnesses and
ambassadors until then

We follow Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd

- unconditional surrender (of our will)
- bearing the Light of the world
- suffering in a world that hates us as it does our Lord

Religion, including the “Christian” religions produces self-righteousness...Is 64:6
Relationship produces righteousness...1 Cor 1:30

It is our heart that is on “trial”, being revealed and tested, by the teaching of Jesus Christ

Let's break into small groups to pray and let the Word of God sink deeply into our hearts

After a few minutes, we will have a Closing song

If care to help tear down, Lord bless you

If care to witness, Ken and Tasha renew their Marriage Vows, your are welcome