The Sermon on the Mount
Class Notes
Session 14

**Matthew 6.1-4** An always potential "threat"…Religious hypocrisy!

**(vs.1-2):** To "practice" righteousness here…was to publically <u>demonstrate</u> one's piety.

Like the…ὑποκριτὴς (*hypokritēs*)…Lit., "To interpret" (Play-actor).

The common expectation was to "show mercy" to those in need.

*Psalm 106.3; Isaiah 58.2; 1 John 2.29*.

The issue is what are one's <u>motivations</u>? Pleasing God or Pleasing "man."

The word "seen" is the Greek word, θεάομαι (*theaomai*): "To be seen" "Visit." This is the root for our word, "Theatre."

"This word by itself would not bring to mind the theatre, but as Jesus begins piling up other terms and activities, such as "hypocrites" (or play-actors), sounding a trumpet, long prayers/speeches, coordination of the right and left hands, and wearing makeup, his hearers would recognize the allusions to the theatre…" (Craig Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary*)

**(vs.2-4):** Beginning here, Jesus will use as examples the three chief acts of <u>Jewish piety</u> (*vs.2-18*):

Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting. The *expectation*…"<u>When</u> you give to the needy…"

The "sounding of a trumpet?" Likely, the image is a <u>Shofar</u>, a ram's horn used in Jewish life and worship.

What is Jesus describing here? Many commentators suggest this refers to the practice of blowing trumpets at the time of collecting alms in the Temple for needed relief.

Others, the sound of coins being tossed into the *trumpet-shaped* money chests ("shofar-chests") in the Temple used for collecting alms.

Graphic hyperbole…(?)…meant to vividly demonstrate the ridiculousness of the action…similar to our "He/she is just blowing his/her own horn."

Righteous acts are to be done "in secret" …Not <u>seen</u> by any onlookers.

The "left and right hand." Again, a hyperbolic description of an attitude of an *unself-consciously* giving/serving that is natural…A kind of "self-forgetting!"

Not done for one's glory. If one's giving/serving is "in private" then God will "see" this…only God can <u>see</u> what is secret—and will reward the giver!

"Jesus calls us to hide our good works when we are tempted to show them. Our works must glorify the Father. The only blessing that counts is the one received from His generous hand. His grace perfects even the least of our good works." (*The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia)

**Matthew 6.5-8** Jesus now turns to the second act of Jewish piety…Prayer.

Prayer had a prominent place in Jewish life.

Although individual prayer was appropriate at any time, pious Jews prayed publicly at set times…morning, afternoon, and evening

Again…it is the motive that is crucial…"to be seen by men." Again, Jesus' point is about hypocrisy.

Rather than "showy" prayer, pray in a private "room."

The Greek word for room is ταμεῖον (*tameion)*… "Inner room" (Storeroom)

**(vs.7-8):** In pagan worship, worshipers would use multiple words and names in order to invoke the deity…often appealing to their "obligations." (Incantations)

"Empty phrases" …βαττολογέω (*battalogeō*): Lit., "To babble"

Jesus encourages simple, sincere, and direct prayers to God because He is our Father…He knows what we need and desires to give us His good gifts!

**Going Forward:** "The first half of chap. 6 begins with a warning: Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven (v. 1). As we have seen, Matthew is concerned with the theme of righteousness, especially as seen in the beatitudes…But how is one's righteousness practiced? Not before people to be noticed by them. If it is, then one can expect no reward with one's Father who is in heaven." (C. Evans. *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary* (David C. Cook, 2003).