

9. Simple Commands against show-offs

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We often chuckle at the scenes when politicians or Hollywood movie stars pose for photo opportunities. When the shots were done, they go about their normal high and mighty lifestyles. We have a word for that the people with this kind of behaviors, 'hypocrite.' The word hypocrite comes from Greek word, 'hupocrit' which means actor.

Often non-believers claim that they wouldn't go to church, because there are too many hypocrites in the church. However, the same people will flock down at the movie theaters to see actors and actresses pretending something they are not and they even pay for them. Oh yes, I understand that these actors and actresses have jobs to pretend, but the Christians are not supposed to pretend their faith in God. That is the precise point that disgusts many people and make God angry with the hypocrites.

The Jewish religious leaders were very good at photo opps. They would go out of their ways to make sure that everyone around them know and see that they are very, very spiritual. They were so good at this hypocrisy that they have this thing down to science. We are going to look at what they did and see if we do the same thing they do.

Hypocrisy is hideous. What cancer is to the body, hypocrisy is to the church. It is a killing agent. Unfortunately, hypocrisy is also addictive. And even though Jesus reserved His most severe words of condemnation for the hypocrite, we still seem to prefer that lifestyle to the truth and authenticity.

Jesus is systematically going over the things that the Pharisees cherish and are proud of: giving to the poor, praying and fasting. Some of us might say, "What's wrong with them? They are all good." You are right, if they were done in godly way. They didn't do this to bring glory to the Father in heaven, but to themselves.

A. GIVING TO PLEASE GOD, NOT SOMEONE ELSE

Matthew 6:1-4 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Jesus tells us how not to do and how to do in giving.

I was told that the original offering box was located in the secret chamber of the tabernacle. That is where wealthy people go in and drop their money into the offering box that is known as "Trumpet" without anyone knowing. Later, the poor go in and receive the gifts from God through those wealthy people. However, the Pharisees saw the opportunity and made the best of it for themselves. They made a small size trumpet and took it out to the street corner and blew it before they started to hand out their gifts to poor. When people heard the trumpet noises on the street,

they saw the Pharisees and their money that they are waving in the air. Jesus tells us that they just received their rewards in people's "woo" and "aah."

"They have their reward," the verb translated "have" was used in receipts and is similar to "paid in full." The only reward the hypocrites will ever receive is glory from men on earth.

For the first-century Jews, helping the poor was equal with righteousness. It reflected God's own righteousness, which was so often expressed in His mercy. But this pure act of righteousness became adulterated with the showmanship of the Pharisees.

When we give things to the people who need or have less than us, we must do it quietly and discreetly. God does not value what we do, but why we do. It is about the motive in our hearts.

A few years ago I was listening to a local Christian radio station. It was one of those fund raise time of the year. The vice president of this Christian radio network who is in charge of fund raising said, "If you send this amount, we will have your name engraved on the bronze plaque in our national headquarters building." I thought of what Jesus said here. The people who would respond to that is the same kind of people who were blowing the trumpets before they gave their money to the poor.

In Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita, we do not pass the offering plate. I am not saying that passing offering plates is wrong. We simply believe that God will lay the desire of offering and tithe in your hearts to put them in the Agape Box to support this church. I strongly believe that where God guides, God provides. If God does not provide, we quit, we close the door without begging to anyone. So far, we pay everything in cash, we owe \$350 in the computer fund which we will pay off in a few months. We just spend over \$5000 for the trailer that we use for transporting the equipment and the sound systems the worship team is using. We don't have a whole lot in savings account, but we are doing just fine because of His grace.

I don't have any idea who is giving how much to this church. It is between you and God, I don't need to know and I don't want to know. I made a strict order to our office manager Pam Youngberg that all I need to know is the weekly total, not individual's offering amount. By doing so, I would not have prejudice toward those who give much, little or not at all.

Is it wrong to help the poor? Absolutely not. Highly recommended by God and we should do so. But it is wrong for any of us to use that opportunity to make ourselves look good. If there is anyone who should look good is our God, not us. So, if we want to help someone or giving our money to some worthy organization or this church, let's do it quietly. Then the Father in heaven will reward us for our obedience.

A friend of mine, Pastor Craig Roters of Calvary Chapel Oro Valley was approached by a very wealthy man who offered him a Harley Davidson limited edition motorcycle. During the conversation, this wealthy man hinted Craig that he'd like to have an elder position of the church. Craig said, "No, you keep your bike." I told him, "Atta boy, Craig." This kind of hypocrisy is still going on.

B. PRAYING TO GOD, NOT TO MEN TO SHOW OFF

Matthew 6:5-6 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

Jesus is not discouraging public prayer but the wrong motives that lie hidden behind a masks of insincerity. As a safeguard against that, Jesus tells us how not to pray in v5.

Did you notice that the hypocrites don't love to pray. They just love to be seen praying.

Then Jesus as the greatest teacher, teaches how to pray properly in v6.

Matthew 6:7-8 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

Jesus once more tells us how not to pray in v7-8. Meaningless eloquent and repetitious prayer does not impress God, but simple prayer with sincerity does.

James 5:16b The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

A long time ago, Buddhist monks were told to pray in repetition until they get answers by their superiors. One smart monk came up with an idea, "Prayer Wheel." He wrote down his prayers on pieces of paper and attached them on his wind chime that rotated. Each time it makes noise and spins, he convinced others that his prayers were repeated. It was a big hit. It hit the stock market, he became a Bill Gates of Asia (Just kidding). Seriously, it became very popular. One Spaniard catholic monk was visiting in that region and learned about this Prayer Wheel and took it to his homeland Spain. Eventually this westernized Prayer Wheel became something known as "Rosary." Repeating the same prayer without thoughts is in vain according to Jesus.

Many Christians are scare to death in praying out loud in public, because they think that somebody might make fun of them, since they may not able to use fancy flowery prayer language. If you feel that way, I have a question to ask you:

Whom are you praying to? The people around you who cannot do anything about your situation? Or to God in heaven who can do all thing and nothing is impossible for Him? Do not concerned about what other people think, but God.

How many of us heard from somebody who tells us that they were up late until wee hours of the morning to pray for somebody or reading Bible. I don't have a problem with somebody telling me about their reading of the Bible or praying, but I have a problem with them letting everyone know that how long or late they've been praying or how much they've read. It is nothing more than show-off.

From v9 to v15, Jesus is teaching us how to pray. We are not going to learn that this morning. We will dig in more next Sunday about "prayer." So we will save it until next week.

C. FASTING FOR GOD'S GLORY, NOT FOR OTHERS TO KNOW

Matthew 6:16-18 "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

The Lord changes subjects now, from praying to fasting, but the term that threads its way through the passage remains the same: personal devotion to God should be expressed privately, not publicly.

Fasting was practiced for a multitude of reasons. Generally, it was practiced to deepen a person's devotion to God. But there were also some very specific reasons for fasting. However, the reason the Pharisees were using is anything but honorable. It involved pizzazz to impress an audience. For it was not uncommon at that time for some who were fasting to leave their hair deliberately unkempt, to wear rumpled clothes, and even to apply cosmetic whiteness to their faces to accentuate their paleness of their skin color from fasting. These hypocrites were not worshiping God.

The definition of fast is: To practice abstinence as a religious exercise from food voluntarily for a time, for the mortification of the body or appetites, or as a token of grief, or humiliation.

When we fast, God expects us to do it in the right way and with the right motives.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Christianity is not show.

If we are not serious about it, we should be out of it. It will do more harm by playing game with God than good.

There was the preacher who got into golf. He became so addicted that he even started going out early Sunday morning. Instead of preparing for sermon, he was getting in nine holes before the first service. One day his guardian angel was sharing with one of the fellow angels of the problem he is having with this pastor that he was guarding, and how the guy was getting into golf and how it was beginning to hinder his ministry and all. "I've got to do something." And he said, "I'll go with you this Sunday morning, we'll watch him." So at the second hole which was a par five, 535 yard, the friend of his guardian angel said, "I've got an idea. I'll take care of him." As the fellow teed off, the angel took the ball and carried it through the air, all 535 yards and dropped it in the cup. The guardian angel said, "I thought you were going to take care of it. What in the world have you done, giving him a hole-in-one on a 535 par five, you're crazy! What have you done?" The other angel said, "Who's he gonna tell?"

2) Pretending our high spirituality might impress others, not God.

God sees all, there is nothing hidden from His sight. God is not impressed by what we do, but why we do.

3) Our devotion for the Lord is cultivated in seclusion, not on stage whether it is in giving, praying or fasting.

We give, pray and fast in obedience to God. There is nothing to boast about it. If there is anything to boast, let's boast about our God who died for our sins and rose again from the death.