



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

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English Standard Version

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## *“The Private Nature of the Kingdom”*

The 14th Sermon in a series on the Gospel of Matthew entitled  
*“The King and His Kingdom!”*

### **Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18**

*“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.”<sup>2</sup> “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.”<sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,<sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

*<sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.”<sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ...*

*<sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.”<sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,<sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

*Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You*

*have brought us again this morning to learn about your Son, Jesus. We ask You to give us the grace to understand more hard teaching here. We're all familiar with giving, praying, and fasting; we just don't like to do them. The words of our prayers need to be given to You. The amount of our gifts needs to be honoring to You. And fasting makes us hungry ... but not for You. We need our hearts changed so that we give, pray, and fast in ways that glorify You and bring honor to the cause of Christ. So by Your Spirit open this Gospel to us and help us to see Jesus, and obey Jesus, and, as always, for this we need Your grace. Give us the desire to learn from You this morning, in the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.*

### **INTRODUCTION: *If Not Higher*<sup>1</sup>**

According to an old Jewish tale titled, "If Not Higher," there was once a beloved rabbi who disappeared every Friday. Unable to find him anywhere, the devoted villagers boasted that their rabbi must ascend to heaven every Friday so he could talk with God. One day, however, a newcomer to their small village heard the stories and scoffed. "People don't ascend to heave," he mocked. "I'll tell you where your rabbi really goes on Friday mornings."

So the next Friday morning the newcomer crept into the woods by the rabbi's house. He quietly watched the rabbi rise, say his prayers and, much to the onlooker's surprise, dress in the clothes of a common peasant. The rabbi walked into the woods, chopped down a small tree and cut it into firewood. Then the rabbi carried the bundle of wood to a shack in the poorest section of the village. An old woman and her sick son gladly received wood for the coming week. They thanked the anonymous woodsman, unaware that it was the rabbi in disguise.

The skeptical newcomer, deeply moved by the rabbi's secret goodness, became the rabbi's disciple. Now whenever the villagers said, "On Friday mornings our rabbi ascends to heaven," he would quietly add, "If not higher."

This simple Hebrew story illustrates a key aspect of how Matthew viewed Jesus' approach to true spiritual life. We might call it "***secret righteousness***" or "***stealth spirituality***." Throughout this Gospel Matthew ushers us into quiet, unnoticed, unspectacular small ways to follow and obey Jesus.

About a month ago, I told you that the New Testament tells us what Jesus taught His followers as He tried to **change** their way of thinking in order to get them to think from God's perspective instead of from a limited human perspective.

We're exploring His life and teachings in this series on the Gospel of Matthew, which I've entitled "***The King and His Kingdom***." Today we continue our study of the "**Sermon on the Mount**" found here in Matthew 5-7. The Sermon on the Mount is important because it tells us **how things work** in God's Kingdom. It's an instruction manual for those who want to follow Jesus and pattern their lives after His, and after His teaching, and after His thinking.

Up to now Jesus has been addressing the matter of personal righteousness in terms of doing the will of God in the realm of **morality**. Now He considers doing the will of God in terms of religious practice, or as we might say today, "spiritual disciplines." And what I find most interesting about all of this is that practicing the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life **is assumed by Christ** ... since we see that He **doesn't command** giving, praying, and fasting but clearly states, "**When** you give ... **when** you pray ... **when** you fast..." These have been

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<sup>1</sup> The Introduction is adapted from a well-known short story credited to the Yiddish writer Isaac Leib Peretz (1852-1915) as found in "*The Gospel of Matthew: God With Us*" by Rev. Matt Woodley, Resonate Commentary Series, page 76

common Christian practices for centuries, and were preceded by the same religious practices of Judaism. So how are we to practice these spiritual disciplines today?

I'm not going to go verse by verse today like I normally do ... since there's so much repetition in these verses we're going to try and look at the big picture. There are several points Jesus is making about personal righteousness here that are very important for living the Christian life. And the first point concerns the ...

### **PRINCIPLES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** <sup>2</sup>

What about Christians having **poor motives**? How do believers show hypocrisy while doing **righteous deeds**? Jesus has set forth the character and practice of kingdom citizens in the first portion of the Sermon on the Mount. And after commanding **perfection** He immediately warns of the subtleties of **hypocrisy** that can creep into our spiritual pursuits. The problem does not rest in the actual pursuits, or in the specific disciplines, but **in the individual heart**.

The first verse sets forth the basic principle that our Lord is driving home, and then He illustrates it in three ways. Look with me at verse 1, "*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people **in order to be seen by them**, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.*"

Three times in these verses we have some reference to "*being seen by others.*" Some versions have "*to be noticed by them*" or "*to be admired by others.*" The word "*beware*" or "*give heed to*" or "*watch out for*" points to the **motives** behind the Christian's devotion and duty. When all is said and done, **why** have we done what we have done in the name of Christ and for the sake of righteousness? When we give our offering or preach our sermons or offer our public and even private prayers or help the poor or discipline our bodies, **what's** been the **motive** behind it?

And again, in each of these illustrations dealing with aspects of religious life, He's concerned that His disciples simply don't go through the motions of these activities, but that they be concerned enough to ask **why** they're doing them. Jesus is very interested that His disciples not only **do what's right**, but He's interested that they do what's right for the right reason.

He's concerned about their **motives**. And He's concerned about their motives because our love and devotion can become tainted with self-centeredness. Because of sin's deceitfulness, the Christian must be aware of our own personal motives for doing righteous things, for performing righteous acts. Doing the right things for the wrong reasons can slip into the most devoted Christian life — so our Lord calls attention to the need for **holy motives in righteous pursuits**.

How can having the right motives, or the wrong motives, affect us while seeking to do good? I suppose we could ask why the issue of motive is even brought up. Doesn't a poor person appreciate receiving donations even if the motive isn't right? He doesn't mind a person calling attention to his gift. He just wants the gift! A congregation might appreciate the content of a sermon even though it's offered with improper motives. We could have special music that might edify and lift the spirits but the motive for it could be skewed.

The Lord calls for more than just the raw act of benevolence towards someone else or a

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**2 The Exposition of the text is adapted from the books, "Preaching the Word: The Sermon on the Mount"** by Dr. R. Kent Hughes, pages 145-151; "*The Gospel of Matthew: God With Us*" by Rev. Matt Woodley, Resonate Commentary Series, pages 76-80; **And the Sermons, "True Religion - Giving"** by Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, 6/29/97, [www.fpcjackson.org](http://www.fpcjackson.org); "*No Hypocrisy*" by Dr. Phil Newton, South Woods Baptist Church, Memphis, TN, 9/2/02, [www.southwoodsbc.org](http://www.southwoodsbc.org).

good deed in the name of Christ. The practices, the deeds, the acts of righteousness may benefit another person, but it's not to be done ***“before other people in order to be seen by them.”*** We may outwardly do well towards others and even be a help to them but the thing that drives us may be **wicked** and **sinful**. Kingdom citizenship calls for higher standards.

Sinful motives can slip into our lives **and we may not even realize it**. On one occasion, the Apostle Peter had been enjoying fellowship with the Gentile believers at Antioch. But when a group of strong-minded Jews that professed to be Christians came into Antioch (they were called “Judaizers”), Peter withdrew from the fellowship with the Gentiles, and held himself aloof from them.

The Apostle Paul confronted him, calling Peter's action ***“hypocrisy.”*** The problem wasn't just when the Jews came into town. It was deeper as Peter's **motive** for being with the Gentile Christians lacked the integrity to keep him committed to them. He was doing the right thing in being with them, but he did so out of convenience and maybe even the desire for attention rather than for the right motive to honor the Lord in his relationships with these Gentile believers.

The coming of the Judaizers exposed Peter's hypocrisy. He wanted ***“to be noticed”*** by the Gentiles when convenient and then by the Judaizers. In both cases he showed hypocrisy in motivation, and as the Apostle Paul put it, **Galatians 2:12-13**, *“He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision.”*<sup>13</sup> *As a result, other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.”*

So when we're giving we're not to, verse 3, *“let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,”*<sup>4</sup> *so that your giving may be in secret.”* And when we're praying we're to, verse 6, *“go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.”* And when we are fasting you are to, verse 17, *“anoint your head and wash your face,”* so that you don't give the appearance of fasting. In other words, when we're exercising acts of Christian devotion and duty we're not to **call attention to ourselves** or **be impressed with ourselves** or to think that we're somehow **adding merit** by our deeds.

The greatest hindrance to having right motives is **the desire to please yourself** rather than the Lord. Selfishness can lead to doing great exploits in the name of Christ ... when we really doing them for ourselves. It can show up by going to the mission field and receiving the accolades of men for such sacrifice, when the real reason is to make a name for yourself. John Wesley traveled to the primitive colonial state of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Georgia to do missionary work before he was even converted. He thought that such actions would improve his standing with God — a totally self-centered motive. And though he did this “good thing” he found it to be a miserable experience twisted by wrong motives.

As we move from principles to practices, it's good for us to be reminded, **Hebrews 4:12**, *“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

So, let's move from principles to the ...

## **PRACTICES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

After stating the principle of considering the Lord by guarding our motives in every act of devotion and duty, our Lord gives three examples that bring this truth home into the realm of daily Christian life.

- **v. 2-4: Giving**

Giving was an important part of ancient Judaism. Even those gleaning the fields were told to leave some of the sheaves behind so that the poor could gather them and have food. The same practice of giving passed into Christianity. But with every act of giving there's still the danger of mixed motives creeping in, verse 2, *"Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."*

Scholars debate whether Christ uses this metaphorically or whether some actually had trumpeters announcing their gifts. In either case, it implies that with the gift came **the craving desire for public recognition**. In our day we would have a press conference or church announcement or a building named for someone or a charitable foundation parading the benefactor. In some church settings, the offering is taken by the members parading to the front and laying their gifts on the table for all to see. In other settings those that give their gifts expect to have certain privileges and even control. The truth is, they're not giving, **they're buying**, and they got what they paid for.

Our Lord's instruction is simple, no boasting, no bragging, and no announcement of the size of your gift, no recognition — instead the giving is done quietly as unto the Lord. We're to find our satisfaction in the joy of giving, not the approval of men. Our Lord uses an extreme illustration to emphasize the intense privacy that should be present when we give to help others, verse 3, *"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* The right hand is the one we normally use in giving because most of us are right-handed. Thus when we give, our giving must be so hidden that the left hand doesn't even see what's happening. The idea is, not only are we **NOT** to tell others of our giving — we're not to make a big deal of it to ourselves.

We're so subtly sinful that we'll refrain from an outward show of giving and then pat ourselves on the back for our profound humility. We simply have to guard against this. Don't keep a mental diary in which you jot down your good deeds, assuming that it's spiritual because you did it privately. Don't keep track. Don't give yourself high scores. Forget your goodness. Follow God. Do it ... and forget it. The second example that Jesus gives is one we're all supposed to be familiar with, and that's ...

- **v. 5-6: Praying**

Prayer is an interesting subject, and one that we'll consider more next week when we dig into the model prayer that our Lord gave us. But for now the focus is upon the **motive** for praying. Do we pray in hopes that others will think more highly of us? Do we pray to somehow **impress even ourselves** that we're so spiritual? Do we pray in order to gain favor with God? Jesus deals with all of this, starting in verse 5, *"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward"*

You can picture the scene. The rabbi calls upon Brother So-and-so to pray in the synagogue, and then he begins the most polished, flowery prayer that the congregation's ever heard. Once he sat down the members of the congregation were awed by his knowledge and use of theological language and obvious spirituality! He sat with a smug grin, knowing that he'd impressed the whole congregation by what he'd said. Jesus declared that **he got what he wanted** ... the approval of others. But he didn't receive what he prayed for in the least. His desire for the approval of others exposed the sinful motives that dictated his prayer.

Instead of such public displays, Jesus commands that we develop the habit of secret prayer. It's not that He discourages public praying ... later on in the book of Acts we find the church gathered for prayer. Rather He calls for public praying that is **an overflow** of private praying, verse 6, *"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*

While we understand that our Lord doesn't want kingdom citizens to use prayer as a platform for self-promotion, do we also see that **He does** want us to pray? Secret prayer — a time when you're alone with God — is one of the best barometers of your devotion to Christ. When you're praying in secret — whether in a room or on a walk or driving in your car — no one's there to be impressed by your clever words. God alone hears and sees, and indeed, that's the promise of Christ. As you pray in secret the Father who sees in secret notices, and rewards accordingly. Just the pleasure of knowing that our heavenly Father hears us should be enough! But Christ promises that He rewards as well.

And then finally, Jesus gets to the really hard one ...

- **v. 16-18: Fasting**

Fasting has been practiced by many different religions for centuries. It's personal self-discipline in which a person denies himself a normal need in order to learn to restrain his passions and desires, and to express his devotion. Often God's people have fasted in order to express humility before the Lord, and to show an earnest desire for the Lord to work in a particular way. Most commonly, fasting involves denying oneself meals in order to give oneself to the purpose of seeking God. But Jesus says fasting is never to be used for drawing attention to one's spirituality or devotion, verse 16, *"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."* The gloomy, sullen looks on their faces give the pretentious fasters a ready audience. The language suggests an almost unrecognizable look, as they leave their hair disheveled, neglect bathing, and maybe even accentuate some strange paleness to their face.

In our day it seems the most common thing for people is to **announce** that they're fasting or to tell others about their fast. I received a booklet from another pastor several years ago telling about his 40-day fast, and how that became the key to his spiritual growth and his church's growth. Then he outlined in true church program fashion how to institute such a fast in one's own life, and how that will be the key to having a big, growing church like his.

What would Jesus say? Well, Jesus tells us in verse 17, *"But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."* In other words, go ahead and bathe, shave, brush your hair, put on deodorant, and take care of the normal necessities of life so that there will be no outward appearance of fasting. Let this be between you and the Lord. The Lord sees in secret and rewards accordingly. **But if only it were all that easy.** Obviously it's not easy, or Jesus wouldn't have to bring our attention to it. In fact, He wants us to know that our personal practices of righteousness are filled with ...

### **PROBLEMS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

More than giving instructions on giving, praying, and fasting, this text is a **warning** to guard our spiritual disciplines, our personal devotion, and our Christian duty from our own self-centered ways. And the text points out, more implicitly than explicitly, two major problems that crop up when talking about our own personal righteousness. And the first is that ...

- **Pride Inflates**

The reason we must guard ourselves is due to the deceitfulness of sin. Conversion doesn't eliminate the presence of sin this side of heaven. We have a new nature and new desires, but we still battle with the patterns and tendencies of the flesh. That's why Romans 12 tells us that we must be constantly renewed in our minds. If the Apostle Peter needed a rebuke by Paul for his man-pleasing spirit in Antioch, and if the Apostle Paul needed a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him from having a self-exalting, exaggerated view of his own spirituality, then we can be pretty sure that we have those areas that we'll constantly battle the flesh.

Again, that is why Christ warns us, "*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.*" The lure of pride is still strong in our lives. We enjoy the applause of men; we may even crave it. **It feels so good.** But it deceives, and will inflict us with incredible wounds if we fail to guard ourselves against flattery, self-promotion, and pride.

And if pride is the inner problem we face, then the outer problem is that ...

- **Hypocrisy Distorts**<sup>3</sup>

The language our Lord used was quite strong. He repeats Himself in verses 2, 5, and 16 that "***you must not be like the hypocrites,***" so that kingdom citizens don't fall prey to the selfish tendencies of the human heart.

Now the term "***hypocrite***" comes to us from the theater, it was commonly used in ancient plays. Dr. Sinclair Ferguson explains, "In ancient drama, an important part of a play was fulfilled by the chorus. As in opera and musicals, it provided commentary on the action of the play. In fact, the **hypocrite** was, 'the one who answered the chorus.' That is exactly what the Pharisees had begun to do. Their religious activities were no longer answering to God. Instead their eyes were fixed on 'the chorus' of men's opinion of them."

In addition, rather than wearing makeup or changing characters, the actors simply wore masks to express the character they played. That's the **hypocrite**. He is one that answers to the chorus of men, and one that wears a mask that covers the reality of his own heart. He pretends to be one thing when in reality he's something completely different. The **hypocrite** has a distorted view of God as Father. Again, Sinclair Ferguson comments, "He is **insecure** before God and, therefore, **seeks security** in what his fellow men think about him." The **hypocrite** has an exaggerated view of the value of human applause, thinking it to be worth more than the favor of the Father. They **hypocrite** turns acts of godliness and self-discipline into parade ground routines. And sadly, Jesus declares three times, "***Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.***"

Now, to be honest, hypocrisy shows up in every realm of life. We find it among politicians, businessmen, and laborers. It shows up in the home life among husbands, wives, and children. And yes, it rears its ugly head among Christians and in the church. The hypocrite has a duplicitous life ... often without realizing it ... giving the appearance of having one motive when in reality another, hidden motive drives him. The politician might claim to be a public **servant** when in fact his inward motive proves him to be a public **serpent**. The businessman might make promises for helping a client then renege once he makes his profit, and convinces himself that it's okay since he's only trying to make a living. Family members might claim to have great love for each other, and yet do everything with a selfish motive to achieve their own personal

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Sinclair Ferguson quotes comes from his book, "*The Sermon on the Mount*" (previously published as "*Kingdom Life in a Fallen World*"), pages 113-114.

desires.

However the hardest type of hypocrisy to spot is not in someone else. It's hardest to spot **in ourselves**. We can pretty quickly spot hypocrisy in someone else but just as quickly **make excuses** for similar hypocrisy in our own lives. What's my motive when I pray or give or discipline myself? It may not be a goal of financial robbery but it could very well be one of robbing praise from others.

And again, the problem isn't your **actions**, the problem isn't your **words**, the problem is **your heart**. And that's because ...

**CONCLUSION: "Your Heart is a Broken Bucket."**<sup>4</sup>

What Jesus calls for is that we examine our motives so that whatever we do might cause us to think about the Heavenly Father. We must practice our deeds without a view of getting the approval of others, as He says, verse 1, **"for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."**

The Lord will not share His glory with anyone else. If it's the approval of others that we long for, then, verses 2, 5, + 16, **"they have received their reward"** by such approval and will receive nothing from the Lord.

Paul captures the heart of Christ's message when he wrote, **Colossians 3:17**, *"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."* Is the divine stamp of approval upon **the very motive** of what we say and do? Is our aim in devotion and duty one of **thankfulness** to God the Father?

While giving relieves human suffering, there's a bigger aim the Christian has to keep in mind. He desires to help others but more than anything, he offers his gift with a sense of gratitude for **the great mercy** that the Lord has shown to him. He keeps the Lord in mind as he makes his gift. It's with a view toward **pleasing God** that the Christian gives. It's because the believer has so thought upon the character and practice of Christ that he desires to do as Christ did in giving, and all to the glory of God.

It's this same thought of personal holiness that the writer of Hebrews addressed in **Hebrews 12:1-2**, *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..."*

He spoke of how the Christian is to lay aside the weights and sins that hinder our faithful walk with Christ. One of the terrifying weights is having **our own sinful motives** creeping into our devotion to Christ. So he tells us to lay these things aside, and then *"looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."* Check your motives. Examine them in light of the selflessness, the gentleness, the meekness called for in the third Beatitude, then look to Jesus Christ, consider Him and the way that He pursued every step with the conscious motive of pleasing the Father.

In this passage Jesus is addressing a fundamental human need: the desire to be noticed, affirmed, and blessed. In clear contrast to some worldviews that downplay or disregard human desires, Jesus acknowledges the reality and even the goodness of this basic human desire. For instance, when my children were younger, I couldn't go outside without constantly hearing

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<sup>4</sup> A small part of the conclusion is adapted from the article, *"Cultivating a Gracious Climate in Your Church"* by Jared Wilson, on his blog [The Gospel Driven Church](http://TheGospelDrivenChurch.com), 3/7/13, found at [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org).

“Dad, watch this.” “Watch me run.” “Watch me do cartwheels.” “Watch me pitch.” “Watch me swim.” “Watch me dunk my brother and try to drown him.” **“Dad, watch ME.”**

Watching your children and praising them is a compulsory parental duty... but it's also a delight. We just do it — instinctively and attentively. And I'm no different from my children because I crave affirmation and appreciation and approval and applause just as much if not more than they do.

But here in Matthew 6 Jesus is telling us that the need for affirmation and appreciation and approval and applause is too big for a human solution. Your heart is like **a leaky bucket**: no matter how much you and others pour praise into the bucket, it never gets filled. It remains an empty, craving, gaping wound. First you have to heal your broken, leaky, needy heart, and Jesus says there's only one thing that can fill the cracks: My Father's Love. That's the message here!

Jesus wants us to be clear on this! There's only two options for the Christian life: One — trust the Father's love and receive His reward. Or two — find your reward right now in the approval of others.

Jesus seems to be saying, “Oh sure, you can get the praise of people. They'll love and admire you. You'll impress them with your fine, upstanding, righteous deeds. But be careful ... **because that's all you'll get.**”

Sometimes I find myself thinking of all the people who need to get their act together, who are self-righteous, and who need a big dose of humility. We may be right about them. But applying this to others first is not taking grace seriously. I need to keep a close watch on my life. I need to show honor. I need to practice confession and repentance. I need to humble myself. And as I think I'm growing spiritually, I need to hold the Fruit of the Spirit up to my broken, leaky heart and be honest about asking, “How am I doing in these areas?”

In the end, the path of hypocrisy and human praise **never satisfies our hearts**. It can't heal the cracks at the bottom of our bucket. It leaves us disappointed and so we demand more — notice **me**, meet **my** needs, give **me** the recognition. And it's exhausting. Our lives become a frantic race to please the people crowding our lives. We can't stop and rest because we're so busy pleasing people. We can't hear Christ's invitation to come and rest ... to be healed ... to fix the broken buckets of our hearts. And that's something that you need. Right now.

So go to the Lord in prayer ... and don't worry about what everyone else is thinking. The only thing that matters is what Jesus thinks.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have sent Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sinful motives and our desire for the approval of others. And then, Lord, open our eyes some more so we can see that our deepest needs for love, acceptance, and forgiveness can only be met by a loving, accepting, and forgiving God, whose approval is all that matters. Give us the faith to truly believe this and give us the strength to live that way before the Lord. Thank You that Jesus makes all this possible. Help us to know and believe that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen.*

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**Matthew 11:28-30**

*“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”*