

PERFECT GIVING

Matthew 6:2-4

I. INTRODUCTION—GIVING TO THE POOR

A. REQUIRED BY THE LAW

- Ex 23:10-11
- Ex 30:15
- Lev 19:10
- Dt 15:7-11

B. EXHORTED BY THE PROPHETS

- Jer 22:16
- Dan 4:27
- Amos 2:6-7

C. REINFORCED IN THE GOSPEL

- Mt 7:12
- Lk 6:36, 38
- Jh 13:29
- Gal 6:2

II. THE TEXT

KJV—2 *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

NIV—2 *So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

NASB—2 *So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

ESV—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. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

The Message— *When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action, I'm sure—'playactors' I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that's all they get. When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.*

III. BACKGROUND

A. CONTEXT

1. LAST VERSE OF CHAPTER 5—SETS OVERALL CONTEXT

5:48— *Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

- a. Context for six previous themes
 1. Began with “righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees”—**5:20**
 2. Explanation of those six themes gave examples of His **perfect** interpretation of the law
 3. Six themes:
 - Reconciliation
 - Faithfulness
 - Respect
 - Truth/honesty
 - Generosity—overcoming evil with good
 - Perfect love
- b. Context for previous and future themes
 1. Six previous themes dealt with two aspects:
 - a. Relationship to neighbor—human to human
 - b. Individual *attitudes* about righteousness—in relation to the *Law*
 2. Next three themes—**Chapter 6**—deal with different dimension:
 - a. Relationship with God
 - b. Religious duties—*acts* of perfection that fulfill righteousness
 3. Jesus describes how to be perfectly righteous—more than scribes/Pharisees—regarding
 - Almsgiving
 - Prayer
 - Fasting

2. **FIRST VERSE OF CHAPTER SIX**—SETS STANDARD FOR DOING RELIGIOUS ACTS

6:1—*Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

- a. Acts of righteousness
 1. Connects to **5:20**—exceed the righteousness of Pharisees and teachers of the law
 2. God does expect acts of religious devotion supported by Scripture
- b. Public displays defeat the purpose
 1. Purpose is **not** to impress men
 - a. Egocentric/narcissistic—trying to gain a *reputation* for righteousness
 - b. Legalistic—trying to impress God by meticulous following of rules
 - c. Hypocritical
 1. Not really caring about the poor—or even God—but only about themselves
 2. ‘Hypocrites’
 - Term used three times in this passage
 - Each time—the *basic* description of those who are wrongly motivated
 2. Purpose is to show devotion to God
 - a. Almsgiving = helping the poor—for whom God especially cares
 - b. Prayer = talking to God
 - c. Fasting = humility before God—seeking His will—and/or repentance
- c. **But** it is all right to ‘be seen’ or known for doing good things—**5:16**
 1. When we shine our light and *allow* people to see our deeds
 2. For the purpose of glorifying God—and not intending to glorify ourselves
- d. Rewards
 1. There *are* rewards for religious devotion
 2. Zero sum game—rewards *either* from men *or* from God
 3. God *does* reward religious devotion—when it is for the right purpose

4. No promise of when or how He will reward us
5. But some things are implied about rewards
 - Probably deferred—to heavenly treasure
 - Probably rewards will enhance our ability to serve and glorify Him eternally
 - Probably not awarded if we do these acts for the *purpose* of future heavenly reward

B. REVIEW OF COMMON TRADITION AND OTHER PRACTICES

1. Common duties in three Abrahamic traditions
 - Almsgiving
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
2. Specific requirements to help the poor
 - a. Jewish
 - **Tzedakah** = charity
 - Continuation of biblical poor tithe—10%—plus allowance of poor to glean fields
 - b. Islamic
 - **Sadaqah**—voluntary giving to poor
 - **Zakat**—required giving
 1. 3rd pillar of Islam—regulated by Islamic law
 2. Give 2.5% of savings—to poor
 3. Give 5-10% of harvest—to poor
 - c. Buddhism—**dana**
 - Giving alms to monks/nuns—to connect with spiritual realm
 - d. Hinduism—**bhiksha**
 - Alms given to religious person—in turn for a religious service

IV. EXPLANATION

A. WORDING

1. So, when [whenever] you
 - a. “So”—shifts to **practical** application of general principle in **verse 1**
 - b. “you”—second person singular
 1. Previous verse—this was plural—“all of you”—speaking in general terms
 2. Now Jesus makes it **personal**—each one of you should listen and do as I say!
2. ‘give to the poor’ = almsgiving
 - a. **ἐλεημοσύνη** = almsgiving [noun]—benefaction to poor—show mercy to poor
 - b. Root for term ‘eleemosynary’—non-profit—merciful organizations
 - c. Present Subjunctive—‘If/when you are doing’ almsgiving
 1. Could mean “if”—in a tentative sense
 2. But probably is more definite than that
 - When combined with “whenever”—probably means—repeated pattern of practice
 - “So whenever you are giving—as you regularly do”
3. Do not sound a trumpet before you
 - a. **σαλπίζω** = blow a trumpet
 - b. Aorist subjunctive = “should not blow a trumpet” [not an imperative]
 - c. Who were the ‘trumpet blowers’?
 1. No record of this kind of activity during Jesus’ day—so it is probably a hyperbole
 2. But lists of benefactions were published—and announced in the streets!
 3. Some scholars say these were the Scribes and Pharisees condemned in **Mt 23**
 - a. Problem—Jesus does not condemn them for sham almsgiving in **Mt 23**
 - b. Instead—probably anyone who made a public show of religiosity
 4. But note this—from **Mark 12**:
 - a. The rich people made a display of throwing their money into the Temple treasury
 - b. And the depositories were shaped like trumpets!

- c. So—could this be an allusion to showy giving—like what was done in the Temple?
 - d. **ἔμπροσθεν σου** = right in front of you—in your very presence
- 4. As the hypocrites do—in the synagogues and in the streets
 - a. **ὑποκριτής** = actor—stage player—pretender
 - 1. They make a big external show—that **masks** their true inner intention
 - 2. They want to bring glory to themselves—instead of true subject of glory—God (**5:16**)
 - 3. So—they make a mockery of true religion—a ‘pretended religion’
 - 4. They also do not care for the poor—but ‘use’ them—in order to gain a reputation
 - b. In the synagogues and in the streets
 - 1. Synagogues
 - a. Religious teaching centers in villages, towns, and cities—all over the country
 - b. Also community centers—the locus of popular gathering
 - c. Implications—hypocrites do this in synagogues in order to:
 - 1. Prove [falsely] they are respectable leaders of religious devotion
 - 2. Get maximum exposure [PR]—as the whole community gathers in one place
 - 3. Country-wide movement—in all synagogues—probably Scribes and Pharisees
 - 2. In the streets—**ῥύμη**
 - a. Term used for narrow lanes in urban areas
 - b. Penetrating into every corner of town
 - c. Maximum exposure among people as they traffic in public business
- 5. Truly, I say to you
 - a. **αμην** = this is certain—true—faithful
 - b. Transliterated from Hebrew—to Greek—to English
 - c. “Believe this—what I am telling you—it is certain!”
 - d. Used in each of these three passages related to religious devotion

- e. Already used twice in the sermon
 - 1. **5:18**—“Truly”—as certain as the Law not passing away until everything is fulfilled
 - 2. **5:26**—“Truly”—as certain as not getting out of jail until the last penny is paid
- 6. They have their reward in full
 - a. **μισθος** = due payment for labor rendered
 - b. **ἀπέχω** = to have fully—completely
 - 1. **Not** the normal word ‘to have’ = **εχω**
 - 2. It means—“paid in full”—“transaction is closed”—“nothing due”
- 7. But when you give to the poor
 - a. **“But”**—completely different situation for you—you are to be different
 - b. Again—the same verb and noun—“when you do almsgiving”
 - c. But the form of the verb are different than in verse 2
 - 1. Verse two = present, active, **subjunctive**
 - If/when you might be giving alms
 - Tentative nature—when comparing your action to that of hypocrites
 - Suggests—watch out—that you don’t do it like them
 - Even if subjunctive is translated to mean regular, habitual action
 - 2. Here—verse 3 = present, active, **participle**
 - As you *are doing* this—not tentative—or hypothetical—but actual
 - So—you *are expected* to do this
 - But not just as an action—‘might do the giving’
 - But as ‘the one who is giving’—participle
 - The action defines who you are—and you define the action’
 - Action and person are inextricably linked
 - Who you are is what you do—and vice versa
- 8. Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing
 - a. Literally—“Don’t let you left know what your right is doing.”
 - b. Left hand and right hand
 - 1. Greeting—giving—and other social actions were done with the right hand
 - 2. The left hand was idle—while the right hand was active

- c. Part of you “is doing” this—**indicative action** by part of **the doing one** [participle]
- d. But do it this way
 - 1. The *other* part of the ‘doing one’ does not even know about it
 - 2. So, one part does not serve the interest of the other part
 - 3. And the two parts do not work together to serve the interests of the ‘doing one’
- e. Aorist imperative verb—**γινώσκω**—‘do not let know’
 - Command—with this thrust → “Don’t you ever do this”
- f. Implications
 - 1. Total secrecy—even part of the ‘doing one’ is unaware of it!
 - 2. Total unawareness of the extent of good one does
 - a. Like Jesus commending the ‘sheep’ in **Mt 25:34-40**
 - b. The ‘sheep’ ask, “Lord, when did we do these [good] things unto you.”
 - c. They did good things simply to help people—and this pleases the Lord
 - d. So—Jesus *had to explain*—“Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these . . .”
 - e. This depicts the right attitude—helping others simply because they are in need!
 - 3. Not self-serving—the ‘doing one’ is not completely aware of full implications
 - 4. Immediately responsive to need—almost impulsively responding without thought
 - 5. Not retractable—the unaware left hand cannot take back what the right hand gives!
 - 6. Does not count cost—the unaware left hand cannot count the money given by the right!
- 9. So that your giving will be in secret
 - a. **κρυπτός** = hidden—secret
 - 1. Root word for ‘crypto’
 - 2. Not the *other* word for ‘secret’—**σιγάω**—‘keep silent’ or ‘hold close’
 - 3. Instead—‘crypto’—means totally hidden—not revealed
 - b. From everyone on the outside
 - c. Even to some degree—from the giver too

- d. Only God fully knows all the implications
10. And your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you
- a. Father
1. Relational term—not as impersonal as ‘God’
 2. A matter of filial devotion—children do things to please the parent
 3. Context—passage shows how to “be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect” **5:48**
 4. ‘Father’ is the accountable person for all three acts of devotion in this passage
- b. Who sees what is done in secret
1. Reminder that God sees everything—not just what is done in public

Heb 4:23—And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Ps 33:13-15—The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; from His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works.
 2. Also, suggests He sees into the innermost secret place—our heart—and motive!

Jer 17:10—I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.

Ps 44:20-21—If we had forgotten the name of our God or extended our hands to a strange god, would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.
- c. Will reward you [openly?]
1. **αποδιδωμι** = ‘deliver’—but not just ‘give’ (**διδωμι**)
 - Give away for profit—sell
 - **Pay off—discharge what is due**
 2. Future tense—a sense of deferred payment—not just now
 3. God does reward [good or bad] for our present behavior

Pr 24:12—If you say, “See, we did not know this,; does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?”

Ec 12:14—the last verse in the book—For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

Rom 2:6-8—*Who will render to each person according to his deeds; to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.*

4. Will the reward be given openly [KJV]?
 - a. φανερος = manifest, apparent, evident, known
 - b. Adjective used as a noun = *that which is* manifest—evident—apparent—known
 - c. Not the adverb ‘openly’—so it does not describe *how* giving will be done
 - d. Instead—it describes the *nature* of the reward itself—which can mean:
 1. A reward which is the obvious/apparent one—for such an action
 2. Or a reward that is evident/known—seen openly by others
 - e. Plus—some scholars say there are two ways to word/punctuate this:
 1. “Your Father who sees **what is done in secret** will give you the reward openly.”

—or—
 2. “Your Father who sees what is done, **in secret will give you** the obvious reward.”