

## **Giving In The Kingdom**

### **Matthew 6:1-4**

#### **Introduction**

The Lord Jesus continues His Sermon On The Mount. In chapter 6 Jesus will cover the broad themes of worship (vv.1-18); wealth (vv.19-34) and our walk as Citizens in His Kingdom (7:1-12). Why does Jesus talk about these things? Remember His theme—true righteousness. Jesus begins with worship because worship is a word that we use to describe our relationship and friendship with God. How we relate to God will determine how we relate to others. The key to understanding this is found in the opening verse; “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them.” The word ‘charitable deeds’ describes anything that we might call a righteous or generous act. Some translations have ‘alms’ but perhaps it would be better to translate this ‘righteousnesses’.

#### **Give: Without False Righteousness (v.1)**

*Matthew 6:1-4 (NKJV)1 “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.*

The religious Jew was deeply aware of the spiritual disciplines of giving, prayer and fasting.

These were holy obligations; marks of personal piety or virtues.

In the ancient world Greeks and Romans were not noted for personal philanthropy. Wealthy Romans or Greeks would give to public projects but it was for the most part to secure public favor. In all fairness to Judaism and the Jews—the Law called on Jews to perform good deeds not for the purpose of rewards or the sake of reward but still promised reward.

It may be more blessed to give than to receive, but the average man is willing to let the other fellow have the blessing.

The Lord Jesus does not make an argument for these disciplines—but rather draws attention to the motives behind these disciplines. Clearly what we do matters to God. Does God expect generosity; communication and sacrifice from His citizens? I think the answer is yes. But the Lord also cares about our motives. Our motives matter to God. Isn't it good enough to drop an envelop on occasion into the agape box—pray an occasional prayer and resist an extra designer coffee drink in order to help out with some worthwhile project?

The Lord Jesus begins with the words; “Take heed” which is always a warning! Right from the start Jesus begins this section with warnings about having the right motives and guarding against hypocrisy while doing these things! What is the warning? Do not seek recognition. The reason: God will not reward. What is the wrong motive? Recognition.

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The Lord Jesus isn't opposed to rewards—he simply will not allow rewards from both men and God. You will receive your reward either from God in heaven at the judgment or from human beings on earth.

We are given a clue about these public displays of generosity in Mark's gospel (12:38-40).

“Then He said to them in His teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, (39) “the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, (40) “who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”

The Lord Jesus knew that the Scribes and Pharisees had perverted the great virtues like giving and generosity into showy acts of pride. Instead of cultivating a character of generosity these shows reduced the participants to swollen bloated self servers feeding their pride.

What were these givers looking for? Approval. The approval and recognition of men.

What do you believe about giving? Most of us have heard more messages on giving than any other subject. And this message could not have come at a worst time. You may be unemployed, or worse facing eviction or some other horrible deprivation. Contrary to popular belief—it is not a sin to be poor and it is not a sin to suffer the loss of material wealth or material goods. Jesus is not condemning the poor and neither does he seek to manipulate the rich. I suspect most who hear this message have far more than they need—and give far less than they should. Prepare yourself to be surprised. God cares about how you give!

The greatest surprise of Carol's young life was receiving a dollar on her fourth birthday. She carried the bill around the house and was seen sitting on the stairs admiring it. “What are you going to do with your dollar?” her mother asked. “Take it to Sunday School,” the little girl replied. “To show it to your Teacher?” the mother asked. “No” she said—“I'm giving it to God. He'll be as surprised as I am to get something besides pennies!”

Some of you may be surprised what you are capable of giving. Some of you may be surprised what Jesus really thinks about giving.

What does Jesus believe about giving? He starts with a warning. Giving has no spiritual value whatsoever if it is motivated by pride, or self-confidence—or theatrics! Giving is unacceptable and worthless if it is done to draw attention to yourself.

### **Give: Without Hypocrisy (v.2)**

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*2Therefore, 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.*

We are to practice kind deeds and loving expressions of generosity. The implication: Christians do good deeds. We are not to do our good deeds like the ‘hypocrites’.

Recognition provides fuel for hypocrisy.

Did people really blow a trumpet before giving gifts? Probably not.

In the time of Jesus near the Temple courtyard was place called the Chamber of the Secret. People would go to the Chamber of the Secret and drop offerings and gifts designed specifically for those who were poor, or were suffering hardship because of illness or some other misfortune. They would drop their gift in a large brass chest that some suggest was in the shape of a trumpet and was in fact called the Trumpet. Later the poor would come to the Chamber of the Secret and be given gifts from the trumpet. It was all done very discreetly, with humility and honesty. As the years went on, the Pharisees decided it wasn’t practical to go all the way to the Temple to give alms to the poor. So instead, they tied a small brass or silver trumpet to the belt that went around their outer garments. Whenever they wanted to give to the poor, they stood on a street corner and blew their trumpet. Upon hearing the trumpet the poor in the area would gather around the generous Pharisee who would disburse the alms (see Jon Courson p. 114).

When Jesus says: “Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward” it means they have received payment in full. Glory from men means recognition from men—gratitude from men—respect and admiration from men. Our gifts are not to secure the respect and admiration of the people around us.

Do you crave approval from men or from God?

Years ago I read Jim Baker’s book “*I Was Wrong*”. The PTL scandal had rocked the entire Body of Christ. Jim Baker had a huge platform on TV with his famous wife Tammy Faye. Reproach and deep suspicion caused many people to quit giving to ministries all together. Jim Baker was sentenced to 45 years in prison for receiving 140 million dollars in partnerships for his Heritage USA project. In his book *I Was Wrong* Baker wrote; “For the first time, I began to understand what Paul meant when he wrote, “But they that will be rich (which I discovered meant: “they that want to be rich”) fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness (1Tim. 6:9-11 KJV). For years I had glossed over that passage of scripture. I ignored it, made excuses for it, or tried to explain it away. I refused the obvious interpretation. I now see that the message was right there all the

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time, so plain, so plain that even a child could see and understand it. I was wrong.” Jim Baker continues; “. . . I could not keep this new found information a secret. I had influenced so many people to accept a prosperity message, I now felt that I had a responsibility to tell my friends what I had been learning from my studies in the Bible. . . I wrote a simple letter. . .

“I ask all who have sat under my ministry, to forgive me for preaching a gospel emphasizing earthly prosperity. Jesus said, ‘Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth.’ He wants us to be in love with Him only. . . many people believe that the evidence of God’s blessing on them is a new car, a house, a good job etc. But that is far from the truth of God’s Word. If that be the case, then gambling casino owners, drug kingpins and movie stars are blessed of God. Jesus did not teach that riches were a sign of God’s blessings. In fact, Jesus said, ‘It is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’ If we equate earthly possessions and earthly relationships with God’s favor, what are we to tell the billions of those living in poverty, or what do you say if depression hits, or what do you say to those who lose a loved one? Many “in name only” Christians would curse God if they lost all their material possessions. Jesus said, “narrow is the way that leads to life and few there be that find it.” Its time the call from the pulpit be changed from “Who wants the life of pleasure and good things, new homes, cars, material possessions, etc—to “who will come forward to accept Jesus Christ and the fellowship of his suffering?” Jesus calls us to come and die, die to ourselves and the world, so he might give us true life” (*I Was Wrong pp.540-541*).

### **Give: Without Recognition (vv.3-4)**

*3But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,*

The thought seems to be with no conscious thought as to what others may or may not think. Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing—was a simple way of saying—without personal advantage—refusing to impress anyone. The implication is that all scheming and planing for personal appearance or impression is gone. **We give with no strings attached.**

**No strings attached does not mean we give haphazardly or blindly with no sense of proper stewardship or accountability.**

The Lord Jesus and His disciples kept a money bag and did in fact give. The assumption is that Christians will give.

The sad truth—most don’t.

I don’t think it means “don’t think about giving.” I think Jesus is making the point that generosity is so much a part of our nature that we act out that out of a grateful heart. John Bunyan wrote; “A man there was, and they called him mad; the more he gave, the more he had.”

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Spurgeon said, “Earn all you can, save all you can, and then give all you can. Never try to save out of God’s cause; such money will canker the rest. Giving to God is no loss; it is putting your substance into the best bank. Giving is true having, as the old gravestone said of the dead man, “What I spent I had, what I saved I lost, what I gave I have.”

You can give without loving, but you can’t love without giving.

*That your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.*

What constitutes proper motive? We give habitually, quietly, privately, secretly. We give secretly because God sees all secrets and God will reward openly what has been done privately.

We give without recognition (in secret).

We give because the God of the Bible is real in our lives. Paul writes in Ephesians 6:7; “not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, (7) with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, (8) knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.”

Charitable deeds or acts of righteousness are not limited to money!

J. Oswald Sanders wrote; “The basic question is not how much of our money we should give to God, but how much of God’s money we should keep for ourselves.”

The most satisfying giving is done and forgotten. It is seeing a need, meeting the need, and not wanting or waiting or recognition. How then should we give? Let’s look at seven principles that may help us as we think about giving.

1. Give to God from the Heart. When you give from the heart you are investing with God. “Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return” (Luke 6:38).

2. Give to God Sacrificially. David refused to give to the Lord that which cost him nothing (see the story of the purchase of Ornan’s threshing floor; 2 Sam.24:24). Later Jesus will teach that generosity is not based on what you give, but on who you are and what you have. The widow who gives the two copper coins gives more than all the prosperous donors who gave perhaps gold and silver—simply because she gave out of her necessity (see Mark 12:41-42).

3. Give to God Now—based on your current situation. The most important thing is that you develop the habit of giving on a regular and systematic basis. I believe Christians should give to the work and support of the local church. “On the first day of every week let each one of

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you put aside and save, as he may prosper” (1 Cor.16:2). The person who will not give when they are poor will not give when they are rich. I heard the story of a man who asked his Pastor to pray that he would win the Lottery. He said if he won, he would give 10% to the church. The Pastor thought about it and said, “sure—if you will promise me you will give 10% of what you make now!” The man said—“but I need that to live on”. He would not be any less greedy if he won the lottery.

4. Give to God Financially—and Spiritually. If God is so rich, if He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, why should I give? That is a good question. The truth is God does not need your money. We as a church do not want your money—for our sake. Paul wrote to the Philippian church (4:17); “Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account”. If you cannot be faithful with something so unimportant as money, who can you be entrusted with spiritual things? Luke 16:11; “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mason, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”

5. Give to God Volitionally—from your free will. 2 Corinthians 9:7; “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.” What if I choose not to give anything? Ever. It is an admission of what you believe about yourself and giving.

6. Give to God responsibility—based on need not greed.

7. Give to God lovingly—not legally—based on God’s generosity towards you. The NT contains no law or percentage that you must give. The amount you give is based on the generosity of your heart and the needs of others. If you are absolutely selfish—give nothing. If you are absolutely unselfish, give everything. If you are somewhere in the middle, give something.

## **Conclusion**

Baylor University is a school in Beaumont Texas. The Christian who gave the money for building that school later lost all his property. Men of the world asked him, “Don’t you wish you had the money back that you put into that school?” He replied, “Not at all. It is all that I have saved. If I had kept that money, I would have lost it too. I am thankful that I gave that building when I did.”

But let me tell you another story. A man writes; “I had a little boy; my firstborn. He was a delight to our our hearts, but he was always costing me something. He needed clothing, shoes, food, and had special needs that I gladly provided, for he was my son. Then one day he died. It was an experience that I hope you will never have. He does not cost me a dollar now. Every need is an unfailing sign of life and growth. Body, mind and soul have their needs and they must

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be met continually. A ministry that is constantly in need of funds is alive and growing and going somewhere. A dead ministry has no need, and will not bother you.”

Most of the giving at Calvary is anonymous. Does that mean that it must always be done that way? Not necessarily. The people in the early church knew that Barnabas had given the income from the sale of his land (Acts 4:34-37). In the early church we read how the disciples (early church members) took their money and goods and laid it at the Apostle’s feet (Acts 5:1-11). The important thing is not the manner of giving—but the motive in giving—what is in your heart. True righteousness will not remain a secret long. In Psalm 106:3 we read—“How blessed are those who keep justice, who practice righteousness at all times!” In the beginning of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in Heaven (Matt. 5:16). The real question is—am I doing this to glorify God or bring attention to myself? A. B. Simpson said, “We are to show when tempted to hide; and hide when tempted to show.”

What is the bottom line? We are to give. We invest in God’s work—we sacrifice for Him who sacrificed for us. We want spiritual riches more than we want financial rewards. We are determined to give—because we want to meet as much need as we can, for as long as we can—because love compels us. **The Great and Glorious Principle—when we forget about our selves—God remembers us—and when we remember ourselves—God forgets**

**Granny used to say—there are three kinds of givers—the flint—the sponge—and the honeycomb. To get anything out of a flint—you must hammer it. And then you only get chips of stone and sparks of fire. To get water out of a sponge you squeeze it—the more pressure the more water. But the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness. What kind of a giver are you?**