

Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom

Watch This! • Message 1

Perry Duggar

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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Pray for a heart that seeks God's approval above all.
- Pray to live a life that pleases God daily.
- Pray that Brookwood is a church filled with authentic believers.

Scripture Reading:

Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in Heaven. When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Matthew 6:1-4 (NLT)

A. Introduction.

(Matthew 6:1. C/R: Galatians 1:10)

Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom, Part 2, chapter 6 of Sermon on the Mount.

- Jesus' longest recorded sermon, taught to a large crowd on a hillside beside the Sea of Galilee.
- Theme: How to live a life dedicated to and pleasing to God by following Kingdom values.

Today's message is entitled, *Watch this!*

1. Theme verse: **Galatians 1:10 (NLT)** – *Obviously, I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ's servant.*
(APP.: Who are you trying to impress? Who do you want watching you?)
2. We live in an era when anyone can gather an audience online!
3. Content creators are constantly posting on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), wanting to receive views, clicks, and thumbs up so they can go viral! [Artie Davis: "You have no social media presence!"]
4. I found no value in being watched, followed by people I would never know.
5. Jesus warned about wanting to be watched, of seeking the approval of people instead of God!
6. **Matthew 6:1 (NLT)**—*Watch out! Don't do your good deeds* [NIV: *acts of righteousness*, RSV: *acts of piety*, GNT: *religious duties*] *publicly, to be admired by others* [Gk. *thēaōmai* = to be noticed, to look closely at, refers to a spectacle to be gazed at, source of our word *theater*], *for you will lose the reward from your Father in Heaven.*
7. Jesus was warning religious leaders - scribes and Pharisees - but also other people, to beware of performing religious activities publicly to impress watching people.
8. The true purpose, the real motivation, of these *good deeds* was to prompt praise for the person performing them, rather than for God; their eyes were on the audience, not on God.
9. They would receive only the approval of people; there would be no reward from God.
10. APP.: Whose approval are you living for? Whose reward do you desire?
11. Your answer will determine your life.

B. Pursuing God's approval (Matthew 6:2-4)

To pursue God's approval...

1. Reject public RECOGNITION.

(Matthew 6:2. C/R: Luke 16:15; 2 Corinthians 10:17-18; Galatians 6:14)

1. **Matthew 6:2a (NLT)** - *When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity!... [A good thing done in a bad way, motivated by self-righteousness!]*
2. Word *hypocrite* is from Greek *hupōkritēs* (hoop-ok-ree-tace'), which means *actor*; it referred to stage actors who wore different masks to play various roles.
3. Some people [notably, some religious leaders] were giving in a *hypocritical* fashion.
4. Their charity was performed publicly to give people the impression that they were deeply devoted to God and honoring Him with their sacrifice; in reality, they were devoted to themselves and used their giving to cause people to honor them!
5. There is no evidence from history or archaeology that a literal trumpet or other instrument was used by Jews to announce their giving, but the sound may have referred to the clang caused by throwing money into collection receptacles; in any event, it referred to giving in a manner that attracted attention - that was Jesus' point.
6. There are many different kinds of trumpets - and many different ways to play them to attract attention.
7. ILL.: Many years ago, a man in the church asked me to come by his office. When I arrived, he gave his contribution personally by placing cash in my hand. (\$100 bills)
8. I received it graciously and appreciated it as a gift to the church, but I wonder if this man was foregoing his blessing from God.
9. Notice these acts of charity were performed in public - in the synagogues and on the streets - when there were private areas where contributions could be made and an area where the poor could come and take what was needed (Chamber of the Silent); people could give, and people could be helped without being seen - but the hypocrites wanted to be seen!
10. **Matthew 6:2b (NLT)** - *I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get.* [They received the reward they truly wanted: people's approval and praise!]
11. Those who give or perform *good deeds* for the purpose of impressing others with their generosity and spirituality will receive no other reward, especially none from God.
12. The term *hypocrite* today means anyone who pretends to be what he or she is not.
13. We become hypocritical and start pretending, play-acting, when we care more about what people *think* about us than what God *knows* about us.
14. People can be fooled rather easily, but God cannot!
15. APP.: Are we more concerned with maintaining an appearance of spirituality to impress people, or are we dedicated to learning how to best use our lives to please God?
16. Hypocrisy can take several forms in the church - but struggling with sin or addiction (or even in a difficult marriage) is not hypocrisy if we admit it, repent of wrongs and seek change with God's help. (Confess to a Christian friend, receive help in Celebrate Recovery, ReEngage for couples, ReBoot for veterans or other support groups.)
17. Hypocrisy appears in the church when non-believers pretend to be Christians and when true believers are sinful but pretend to be spiritual.
18. In both cases, our concern with people's opinions causes us to conceal our true selves from others - and from God (though this is not possible), which prevents us from honestly addressing our issues and living faith authentically.
19. APP.: If struggling to believe, ask your questions; if hiding some sin, find help.

2. Refuse private **REFLECTION**.

(Matthew 6:3. C/R: Proverbs 21:2; 2 Corinthians 10:17-18; Ephesians 2:10)

1. **Matthew 6:3 (NLT)** - *But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*
2. This was possibly a proverbial expression that simply referred to doing something spontaneously, with no special effort - almost as a reflex.
3. The right hand was considered the primary hand of action, so many tasks would be performed without involving the left hand.
4. Since there is no practical way to do what Jesus described, I think this is a figure of speech, which means we should not even think about the good we do; just do it!
5. Becoming too self-conscious about our acts of generosity can produce pride in what we have done, so we become self-righteous - which again focuses our attention on us.
6. **2 Corinthians 10:17-18 (NLT)**—*As the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD." [Jer.9:24] When people commend themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them.*
7. Anything that turns our focus away from dependence on God's sustaining grace to our own abilities and efforts will frustrate our spiritual growth.
8. If our minds are filled with appreciation for God's love and gracious goodness to us, we will respond to whatever needs we encounter in others without hesitation.
9. As we are transformed by God's Spirit into His likeness, giving and serving will become automatic responses to needs that don't require an inner struggle to decide to help.
10. Our good deeds won't be determined by the response of the person (grateful?) because our action is not based on that person's response but on God's guidance.
11. **Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)** - *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*
12. As we are conformed to God's character and led increasingly by His Spirit, we care only about God's opinion of our lives, becoming unconcerned about others' attitudes.
13. APP.: Are you fulfilling God's plan for your life? Living for His approval?

God's approval includes...

3. Receive spiritual **REWARD**.

(Matthew 6:4. C/R: Jeremiah 17:10; Galatians 1:10; Hebrews 4:13)

1. **Matthew 6:4 (NLT)** - *Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*
[Will God reward us? Yes!]
2. God will reward us for gifts given in ways that please Him - and He sees every action.
3. **Hebrews 4:13 (NLT)** - *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable.*
4. God rewards His children who faithfully trust, serve and obey Him.
5. In fact, five of these rewards are referred to as *crowns* in the New Testament: the imperishable crown (1 Corinthians 9:24-25), the crown of rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19), the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), the crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4), and the crown of life (James 1:12).
6. These rewards were gained only through the relationship we have with God; they will remind us of what He did through us while we lived on earth. (Celebrate them!)
7. He'll say, *Look what you accomplished*; we'll respond, *Only through you!*
8. It is not unspiritual to expect and anticipate those rewards if we do so in a spirit of humility and gratitude, knowing that God's rewards are given to children He loves out of His grace, not because we earn or deserve them.

9. The temporary adoration and applause of this world can't compare with the eternal reward of our Heavenly Father.
10. Like the 24 elders in heaven (Revelation 4:10-11), perhaps we can cast our crowns and place our rewards at Jesus' feet as we praise His name.
11. APP.: Are you using your life to please God, to gain His approval, for rewards you will give back to Him?