

Sermon on the Mount Part 14
“Beware of Hypocrisy Part 1”
Matthew 6:1-4 and 16-18

I. Beware of serving “giving alms” for show (Verse 1)

- In the culture in which Jesus was living the act of “giving alms” was a very important part of the culture. In some translations of the scripture you will actually find this verse worded “practicing your righteousness” before people.
 - The acts of service or “giving alms” were used interchangeably with the word righteousness.
 - Giving of Alms simply meant giving in order to meet the needs of the poor.
- Jesus warns us to “take heed” as we perform our Christian acts of service
 - Be alert, be vigilant, and be sober.

II. How are we supposed to give of our Christian service? (verse 2-4)

- We are not to make a show of our giving (physically or financially)
 - When we give do not sound the trumpets like the HYPOCRITES do in the synagogues!
 - Our giving or acts of service should not be done to receive the praises of man
 - Our “alms” should be done in such a way that glory is given to the Father.
 - Remember the thought in Matthew 5:14-16
 - We are to let our light shine before men so that God receives glory not us.
 - When we make a show of our giving the praises of man is all that we will receive. God does not honor the gift given in Hypocrisy.

III. What is fasting for the believer? (Verse 16-18)

- As we move into this section of scripture it is important that we have a good foundational understanding of what Jesus is speaking about when He references the word “fasting”
 - Many times in our culture today we will interpret fasting to simply mean giving up something for a period of time.
 - This could be denying yourself a privilege or a luxury that you might normally enjoy.
 - Giving up something (food or material possession) for a period of time.
 - In short the overall view of fasting has greatly been diminished in the culture in which we are living today.
- First point of interest is that Jesus said “WHEN” you fast not “IF” you fast
 - When the bible speaks of the practice of fasting it is speaking of not eating for a period of time.
 - Here is a brief list of some NT practices of fasting
 - Matthew 4:2 Jesus fasted for forty days and nights prior to being tempted by Satan
 - Matthew 17:21 Jesus states that a particular demon could only be cast out by prayer and FASTING
 - Luke 2:37 speaks of a widow woman who practiced fasting
 - Acts 10:30 we find Cornelius fasting and God reveals that Peter was to come to Cornelius’ house
 - Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas pray and fast over the selection of elders for the church in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.
 - I Corinthians 7:5 Husbands and wives are to mutually agree upon abstaining from intimacy only for a period of time for prayer and fasting
 - II Corinthians 6:5 and II Corinthians 11:27 Paul speaks of fasting in the midst of trials.
- Why would a believer choose to fast as in the examples listed in the preceding scriptures?
 - Here are 4 general reason why a believer would want to fast
 - There are times when a believer will feel a special pull to be alone with God and to totally focus all thoughts and energy upon their relationship to God.
 - There are times when a special need may arise. This may be a direct need for the believer, or believer’s family, immediate friends, or just general concerns.
 - There are times when a believer simply needs to practice humility before God. Psalm 35:15
 - There are times we the believer needs a special moving of the Holy Spirit and power from God. Examples of this from scripture would be Matthew 17:21 and Mark 9:29

IV. There is a right and a wrong way to fast

- The Wrong way to fast
 - Fasting is an intimate practice between the believer and the Lord
 - Fasting is not to be done so that others will view us as spiritual, holy, or some super saint.
- The Right way to Fast
 - In short the right way to fast would be to simply not allow anyone to even know you are fasting.
 - Jesus says “anoint your head with oil, and wash your face”
 - This is in stark contrast to the method that the hypocrite would use in their practice of fasting.