*Introduction*

We have been looking at the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest sermon, preached by the greatest preacher. In chapter 5 of Matthew we have looked at the beattitudes and saw from them exactly who we are in Christ Jesus, we have also seen that we are called to be salt and light, where by we are to bring flavour to other peoples lives and shine out to all the world.

We have seen how Jesus came to fulfil the law, not do away with it, how the law and the prophets all pointed to Jesus and how he fulfilled the law completely.

Then we looked at what Jesus said about various subjects under the heading "You have heard it said...but I say"

Chapter 5 gives us a clear understanding of what God wants from us in the last verse:

***48Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.***

Having set the scene for us and putting the Pharisees and Scribes in their place by telling us that living by the spirit of the law takes precedence over the word of the law, stating that its about our hearts, and how we think, not just about what we do,

Jesus now comes to "getting personal".

Chapter 6 is all about personal living, righteous living.

This chapter deals with 2 different aspects, our 'religious' life and our life 'in the world'.

The first 18 verses deal with the religious life, the culture and nurture of the soul, our piety (goodness, faithfulness, holiness), our worship. Things concerning our direct relationship with God.

After all, we must remember that we are children of the King, citizens of a kingdom that cannot be seen, we are just travelling through this world on a journey to home.

The rest of the chapter deals with the second aspect - our relationship with the world, our life in general.

Jesus deals with both of these things comprehensively, therefore he considers them important, and so should we.

When we become Christians, our lives do not become easy, our problems and difficulties do not simply vanish. The opposite is true, the Christian life is full of difficulties, pitfalls and snares.

This is why we need the Scriptures, because it contains the instructions for right living, victorious living and Christlike living.

If life were easy, we would not need it, but life is not and we need divine guidance.

We are going to look for a short time this morning at the first four verses of this chapter - entitled in the NIV as "Giving to the needy".

The chapter opens with these words of Jesus:

***1 ‘Be careful not to practise your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.***

In the previous chapter Jesus warns that Christian 'righteousness' had to far exceed that of the Pharisees.

Now the Pharisees would do their giving, their worship, their prayers in such a way that said "Hey, look at me"

Jesus is clearly showing us not to do these things "to be seen".

Now, we seem at the start to have a bit of a problem! anyone spotted it?

In chapter 5 we are told

***Matt 5:16In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.***

On the surface, this seems like a contradiction, but it is not.

There are actually 3 principles at work in what we are looking at this morning,

the first is the delicate nature of the Christian life, it *is one of balance and bearing*

On the one hand we have to live in such a way that we are 'the light of the world' and that others may see our good deeds, and on the other, we have NOT got to do our deeds in front of others.

There is no contradiction, but there is a difference.

It is almost...almost impossible not to be seen by 'someone' when we do something, but it is all about how we go about doing our deeds that is important.

We used to say to our children when they were growing up - "if you do something in this village, be sure to know that we will find out about it" and sure enough that's exactly what happened.

Let me give you an example, from my fire fighting days.

I was part of a team, a fire engine usually has 5 firefighters on board. A large fire occurs in a nearby town, an office block is on fire and many persons are trapped, we get to work and rescues are made, and everyone gets out safely and the fire is extinguished.

A news team come up to me with their cameras, they have a live link to the studio that is broadcasting the fire, they ask me what has happened....

"well I rushed into the building and saved 6 people from the first office, I then went back in and saved 4 from the next, when everyone was out, I took a hose in and put the flames out. It was a great job, and I did it!!!"

In the newspapers the next day the headline is "Hero firefighter Steve saves the day"

Everyone wants to know me.

OR

I could have said "the crews were really busy rescuing people from the different offices and putting out the fire, we all worked together to get the job done.

In the newspapers the next day the headline is "Hero firefighters save the day"

A good deed has been done, but the credit goes to the right people.

In the same way, our good deeds are to point to Christ and not ourselves.

***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 honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.***

Its always nice to have praise for things you do, but it does not last long and once its gone, its gone.

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

It comes back to what is in our hearts, why are we doing what we are doing? is it because the love and mercy of God compels us, we want to please Him.

Its a delicate balance because at one and the same time, we will attract attention to ourselves and yet we are not, if we are bringing glory to Jesus.

The second principle at work here is this:

*We always have the choice as to whether we please God or please ourselves.*

Sometimes we kid ourselves into thinking that if we do this or that we will please others, but the choice is not pleasing God or pleasing others, it is pleasing God or ourselves.

Because when we please others, we are doing it because it please us.

When we please others, we know they will say things like "Steve - he's a great bloke" and that pleases me. I want to be seen as a great bloke, a man that stands out, stands tall in the community, because that pleases ME!

It comes back again to the heart and our motives for doing the things we do.

We are selfish.

*According to our Lord it comes to this: man by nature desires the praise of man more than the praise of God.*

The question is - Who do you want to please?

This brings us to our third principle:

*The supreme matter in this life and world for all of us is to realise our relationship to God.*

For everyone of us, our relationship to God is of the utmost and highest importance.

If we want an example of this, let us look at the life of Jesus.

When Jesus was questioned about the greatest commandment he said:

***Matt 22:37Jesus replied: ‘“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”[***[***c***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-23910c)***] 38This is the first and greatest commandment. 39And the second is like it: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”[***[***d***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-23912d)***] 40All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.’***

Jesus fulfilled this commandment.

The thing that mattered most to Jesus was his relationship with his father, He always wanted to do the things the Father wanted Him to do,

Is there anything that stands out in Jesus life more clearly - He lived entirely for God.

***John 14:9Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? 10Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.***

a bit later He states

***John 14:23Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.***

***25‘All this I have spoken while still with you.***

When Jesus performed miracles, he didn't tell the people who were healed to "go and tell everyone, tell them to look at me", he said things like "Go and show yourself to the Priest". He didn't draw attention to himself for the favour of man, but for the glory of His father.

In the garden of Gethsemene when he was sweating drops of blood in utter despair of what was to come, a point when he could have pleased himself and walked away, he said

***Matt 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’***

***Matt 26:42 He went away a second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.’***

His relationship to His Father was of the utmost importance. He lived to do the Fathers will.

As we close, we must also realise and understand that God is always with us, we are always in his presence. He knows our every action and motive

*Conclusion*

The subject of rewards is often a trouble to many. But in closing I will say but one thing.

Everyone of us will stand at the judgement seat of Christ to give an account of the things we have done in this life.

If we have spent our lives seeking the praise of men, having all the world can offer in this life, a life of pleasing yourself, then you have had your reward and you will have nothing from Him. He will say "Go away from me, I never knew you".

But...if you have known Jesus, and trusted Him for your salvation, and got on with the things he wanted you to do, without fuss or fanfare, you will be rewarded.

***Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.***

Is your name written in the book of life?

Your name is written it at the point you turn to Christ in repentance and trust.

You do not know how long you have in this life, ask Christ to forgive your sins and follow him, so that you will have eternity with him.

There is rejoicing in heaven over every sinner that repents, will that be you today?

Amen