



What are disciples of Jesus really aiming for? What's our goal? Whose attention and praise matters most to us? Let's remember what Jesus told his followers in Matthew 5:20:

"For I tell you, unless your \_\_\_\_\_ exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

That's a good reminder because from the beginning of Matthew 6, Jesus is going to talk about "practicing your righteousness," and he starts with a warning.

"\_\_\_\_\_ of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be \_\_\_\_\_ by them, for then you will have \_\_\_\_\_ reward from your Father who is in heaven." (6:1)

Okay, but "practicing your righteousness"... what are we talking about? Maybe a few examples would be helpful...

"Thus, when you \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your \_\_\_\_\_ who sees in secret will reward you.

"And when you pray, you must not be like the \_\_\_\_\_. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their \_\_\_\_\_. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who \_\_\_\_\_ in secret will reward you." (6:2-6)

In the sermon, Jesus continues to talk about prayer and we'll circle back to talk much more about the prayers of a disciple in our next lesson. For now, Jesus gives us one more example of "practicing your righteousness":

"And when you \_\_\_\_\_, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may \_\_\_\_\_ be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward \_\_\_\_\_." (6:16-18)

So what's our goal? Whose attention are we really living for? Let's talk about it...



# For Class & Family Discussion:

1. Let's take a moment to think about this "practicing your righteousness" phrase that Jesus uses multiple times in Matthew 6. How would you rephrase that in your own words? Why does "righteousness" need to be "practiced"?
2. How could a religious person get to the point where they are practicing their righteousness "in order to be seen by other people"? Is that dangerous? If so, why? Can you think of any examples of how disciples of Jesus today might fall into the same trap?
3. Jesus has given us a few examples. As you look back over them, what stands out to you? What do we need to remember and apply from...
  - 6:2-4 - "when you give to the needy..."
  - 6:5-6 - "when you pray..."
  - 6:16-18 - "when you fast..."
4. In each of these examples, Jesus describes our heavenly Father as "your Father who sees in secret" (6:4, 6, 18). Think about that phrase. Why does it matter?
5. At the end of each description is a promise: "your Father who sees in secret will reward you." What is the reward for a disciple whose aim is where it ought to be? How might remembering that reward help us live the way we ought to live this week?