

## “DO GOOD AND DO IT RIGHT”

Text: Matthew 6:1-4

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### INTRODUCTION:

1) Lesson in the Old Testament: When Prophet Samuel was sent by God to the home of Jesse to choose one of his sons to become the new king for the Israelites to replace King Saul who knowingly refused to obey the command of God, Samuel made a mistake most of us would make: Looking at the superficial quality of a man: his size, his look, his height, his persona, etc. But God corrected Samuel and told him there is a difference between man and God when it comes to judging what is good or what is right. God told him: “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7) The appearance means the outside while the heart means the inside.

2) Lesson from the Lord Jesus: In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about many important principles on the qualities of true disciples. In chapter 6:1-18, he emphasized on the importance of the inner motive when we do some good and religious, like giving to the poor, prayer and the ritual of fasting. While all these, and some others, are noble acts of religious practice and are parts of a good Christian life, Jesus wants us to pay attention deeper than the outward actions. While Jesus considered all these are good works, he wanted us to see beyond the appearance of generosity, piety and spirituality. He asked that we look deeper into the heart of man when he does something seemingly spiritual or Christian: His motive, his true purpose.

### DO THE GOOD THINGS: (6:1, 5, 16)

1) Good things we need to do: “Acts of righteousness” means do things that are “right, good” in nature. The Greek word, *dikaiosunen*, comes from *dixaios*, it refers to things that “start from good nature for good purpose.” Here Jesus mentioned three things that will achieve good purpose as he saw them: Giving to the needy, righteous act between you and the poor, (6:3); prayer, righteous act between you and God, 6:5; and fasting, righteous act for your own spiritual growth, 6:16. No one may know why would Jesus choose and pick these three righteous acts among many possible others, but these three do encompass three major areas of life for all people: our relationship to God, to others and to ourselves. In all these areas, Jesus wanted us to do well.

2) Righteous acts then and now: In the Bible, particularly in the O. T. God had so much to teach the Israelite to care for the poor, the widows, orphans, and those who were taking sojourn in their midst. God always reminded them that they were once sojourners in Egypt, the land of slavery; so, in turn, they need to care for those who were taking sojourn in their land. The best story of this kind is in the book of Ruth. Very early in Church history, seven men were chosen to organize and help to distribute food to take care of the widows in their midst. (Acts 6) Paul devoted large part of a chapter 5 in 1 Timothy, to teach Timothy how to take care the widows in his church. In all 2,000 plus years of Christian history, Christians had done much, much more than all other religions combined in helping the poor and the needy in education, in medical, food and shelter services, and to elevate their social position.

3) Danger faced by righteous acts: In time of traumatic situation, we still see heroic acts done by Good Samaritans to save lives of innocent people from life threatening situation. But in overall society, apathy has crept into the mindset of many people: I don't care, I can't do anything, it isn't my business, etc. In a country rich in material convenience, the need of material support is less urgent than the support of love, care and friendship. We read and know we suppose “not to only care about our own interests, but also the interests of others,” (Phil 2:4) and we are to “carry each other's burden.” (Gal 6:2) If we believe that people in our church are our family, we need to show care, love, and support to each other in time of their needs. Then we are to expand our acts of righteousness to the community by giving, volunteering to help the needy. Most Chinese Christians are loyal and fervent in serving the church and helping each other in the church. But historically and for various reasons, Chinese people has so much to catch up in giving back and helping out the community at large beyond our own family and church.

### DO GOOD THING THE RIGHT WAY: (6:1)

1) Do good with good intention: “Be careful not to do your righteous acts before men, to be seen by them.” (6:1a) Jesus cares not just our righteous acts but the intention of doing those acts. He cared more than “what” we do, but “why” we do it. “To be seen by men” is on purpose to earn their praise, show off our good deeds. This is what the world is doing: If you do something or give something to some one or some organization, they will find a way to “honor” you and all people will know what you had done. People who are not believers of Jesus do things the worldly way, but we are God's people, we

can't do like the worldly people do. Anything we do or give must be done with a noble intention, not for a selfish purpose. If the recipients want to do something to honor your good deed, no problem. But there shouldn't have any intention for personal gain before you do the good deed.

2) The danger of false righteous acts: “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do.” (6:2) Hypocrite come from *hypokrites*, an actor who wore a mask in ancient plays, pretended to be some one he was not, like a king or a hero. Today, we see actors in movies acted like they were presidents, superman, etc. This hypocrite would choose a spot in the city where lots of people gathered, to give to the poor. On top of that, he will hire a team of trumpeters to go before him to maximize the attention of the people so his act of giving will bring him the maximum honor or glory. Today we have different ways to draw attention of others for our good deeds. The word hypocrite isn't used to discredit the good deeds, be it giving to the poor, or the prayer we offer God or fasting, those are still good deeds. Hypocrite is used to describe the inner motive that is false in nature. Let no one dishonor good deeds with false or dishonest intent. It doesn't pay.

3) The loss for fake righteous acts: “I tell you the truth they have received their reward in full.” (6:2b) When we do good deeds to draw the attention of men and receive honor from men, there isn't any more reward from God for what we do. “Reward” from *misthon*, means payment in full for goods or service rendered: You do something good and receive payment in full for that, in this case from men, not from God. As Christians, this is the most severe penalty for all our good deeds if we don't do them with clear conscience and pure purpose. No one should receive twice the payment for any good work, he either receives it from men or from God, not both.

#### REWARD IN DO GOOD THE RIGHT WAY: (6:4)

1) Good things done in secret: “So that your giving may be in secret.” (6:”4a) “Giving” in Greek, *ele-emosune*, means giving material things we call alms, like money, food, clothing to those in need, we usually call charitable giving. So doing good means giving, not just thinking or feeling. This kind of giving comes from a heart of mercy, not obligation: You don't have to give but you do because you have love and mercy in your heart.

“In secret” here doesn't mean “shameful.” Most people will keep shameful things in their life secret. Secret here means quietly, unpretentiously without intention to show off. That is the kind of giving God loves to see us do.

2) God sees good deeds in secret: “Then your Father who sees what is done in secret.” (6:4b) We all know that God is omnipotent and omniscient. He is all able and all knowing. Most times we know that God sees our sins, things we have done wrong. But here Jesus wants us to know that God also see things in our life we do them right. This is a very important doctrine we need to remember: God isn't a police, always spies on us what we do wrong. But God is a merciful Father always looks for ways to reward us on things we do right. With or without any intention on our side, God is able to see any and all the good things we do, be it to others, to God or to our own spiritual growth.

3) God rewards good deeds in time: “(And he) will reward you.” (6:4c) Jesus didn't say we have the intention for reward when we do good deeds. But he did say God will see what we have done and He will reward us for that. In the Bible, we know God is just and faithful, and he will render to us what we deserve be it good or evil. (2 Cor 5:10) Some ancient scripts added “in the public) after the word reward. No one may know when you give to the needy. But when God see it and rewards you in public for those good things you have done, everyone can see that. This is a great encouragement for all of us to do good: God's rewards. Too many people tend to be stingy in giving, serving, helping or sacrificing for God and others because they wrongly believe that it will cost them something they want to keep for themselves, be it their time, their money, their heart, etc. But God has promised to reward our giving with much rewards. The words of King Solomon may help us to see giving in a more panoramic perspective: “One man gives, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.” (Proverbs 11:24)

### THESE WE NEED TO DO:

1) We need to do good work: Be it giving to the poor, or setting quiet time to be with God, or do some spiritual exercise like fasting, among other things, we need to seek opportunities to do that up to our ability. Being stingy or lazy in pursuing growth is not what God expects of us. Without these, we cannot accomplishing God's plan in our lives. And we can't receive God's reward.

2) We need to do it the right way: Doing good thing isn't enough. We need to do that in the right way: Not to seek glory from men, but do it to glorify God. In Gal 6:9, it says: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” God will replenish your