

20260726 The Audience of One – Ps Bijoy

Matthew 6

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 6. Before we read it, we need to go back one verse further than most people start, because Jesus does not begin a new subject in chapter 6. He finishes a sentence he started in chapter 5.

At the end of chapter 5, Jesus says this. If you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Then chapter 6 opens. Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Notice the word that ties these two verses together -“Reward.” Jesus uses it six times across this passage, in verse two, four, five, six, sixteen, and eighteen. This is the spine of the whole text. Jesus is still answering the question he raised at the end of chapter 5. What kind of reward are you actually after? Everything he says next falls under two simple points.

The Reward of Being Seen by People Is Already Spent

Jesus gives three examples, giving to the needy, praying, and fasting, and all three follow the same pattern. Do not do this like the hypocrites.

We need to understand what a hypocrite meant to his original audience. The word described a Greek actor, someone who travelled from town to town, entering with trumpets announced ahead of him, painting his face to project whatever emotion the scene required. His entire craft was performance for an audience. That is the picture Jesus chooses deliberately. When he says the hypocrites sound a trumpet before them,

or disfigure their faces while fasting, he is saying plainly, these people are acting. Their righteousness is theater, and the applause of the crowd is the only payment they will ever receive for it.

This is why Jesus says, truly I say to you, they have received their reward. Not will receive, have received. The transaction is already complete. They performed for an audience, the audience watched, that is the entire deal. There is nothing left over from God, because nothing was ever offered to God in the first place.

This also reframes the command Jesus gave back in chapter 5 verse 20, to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. Many people hear that and panic, assuming Jesus wants more religious activity, more visible effort, more impressive output than the most religious people of the day. That is exactly backwards. The scribes and Pharisees were not lacking in quantity of religious action. They were lacking in secrecy of motive. Exceeding their righteousness was never about doing more. It was about doing it unseen, for an audience of one.

The Reward of Being Seen by the Father Is Certain

Go back once more to the end of chapter 5. Jesus has just said, you must be perfect as your Father is perfect. What does that perfection look like, practically? Chapter 6 verse 1 through 18 is the answer. It looks like giving, praying, and fasting done in a way that no other person on earth ever sees.

Why would hiddenness be the mark of perfection? Because that is how the Father himself operates. Earlier in the sermon Jesus said the Father sends rain on the just and the unjust. God blesses people constantly without requiring an audience to witness the blessing or applaud it. He is not performing, He simply gives, because giving is who He is. If the disciples are to be sons of their Father, their righteousness has to take on the same

unseen quality. Not because secrecy is a rule to obey, but because secrecy is what love looks like when it has nothing to prove.

So when Jesus says your Father sees in secret, he is describing the location where real righteousness actually happens. Not on a stage. In a room with the door shut. In a fast no one else can understand. The praying, the giving, the fasting that matters to God occurs precisely at the point where it is between you and God.

And the reward that follows is not vague. Jesus does not say your Father might notice, or may respond eventually. He says will reward you. The promise is not conditional on being discovered by someone else first. It stands on its own, attached only to the fact that the Father was present the entire time, in secret, watching what nobody else could see.

This should not unsettle anyone. It should do the opposite. If your acts of devotion this week have gone completely unnoticed by another human being, that is not a loss. According to Jesus, that is the correct outcome. The skipped meal nobody commented on, the prayer nobody overheard, the quiet obedience that produced no compliment and no audience, these are not wasted. They are the precise moments the Father was watching and the precise moments he intends to repay.

Notice again that Jesus does not use the word reward loosely. Whatever is owed for what has been done in secret is not filed away for some distant accounting. It is a debt the Father intends to settle, and Scripture never treats his settling of debts as small or symbolic. When God rewards, he rewards as God, with power that matches his nature, not with a token gesture scaled down to what feels safe to expect.

This is why the church in the book of Acts never treated fasting and prayer as private devotion with no consequence in the visible world. When they gave themselves to it earnestly, doors opened that had been shut, chains fell in cells that had been guarded,

and direction came that changed the course of the gospel itself. That was never a different kind of Christianity than the one Jesus describes in Matthew 6. It was this same principle in motion, the Father rewarding openly what his people brought to him in secret.

Conclusion

So do not walk away from this week expecting nothing more than a clear conscience. Jesus has not been describing a private discipline that ends where it started. He has been describing a great reward from a Father who sees, who keeps his word, and who rewards. What has been asked of him this week in secret, he intends to answer, and he intends to answer in a way that is seen. Finish these final days expecting exactly that, because the God who made this promise has never once made it in vain.