>>>>>>> ***Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 09*** <<<<<<<

1) Matthew 6:1 introduces a section of the sermon that could be called "the forms of ***religious righteousness***."
2) It really applies to all of the illustrations we will see in verses 2-18.

Matthew 6:1 (ESV)
Giving to the Needy

1 "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.

3) James McDonald (mid 1800's Baptist preacher) said he never wanted to be called "religious."
   a) Good things to be called would be faithful or Christian.
4) The story is told of an eastern ascetic holy man who covered himself with ashes as a sign of humility and regularly sat on a prominent street corner of his city.
   a) When tourists asked permission to take his picture, the mystic would rearrange his ashes to give the best image of destitution and humility.
5) Here are some blanket statements:

A great deal of religion today amounts to nothing more than rearranging religious "ashes" to impress the world with one's supposed humility and devotion.

The problem, of course, is that the humility is a sham, and the devotion is to self, not to God.

Such religion is nothing more than a game of pretense, a game at which the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day were masters.

Do you see any application in these statements to us or are they way over the top?

6) Jesus now begins to spell out a few specifics of some acts of "religious righteousness."
7) He will use the word hypocrite several time throughout these next verses.
   a) The Greek word ὑποκριτας translated "Hypocrite" was for "actor," one who wore a mask and pretended to be someone he or she wasn't.

Matthew 6:2 (ESV)

2 "Thus, when you give 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 others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

8) First, I think it is important to note that it is WHEN – not – IF you give to the needy.
9) The law required giving to the poor. In Deuteronomy 15:11 we read regarding needy brothers:

Deuteronomy 15:11 (ESV)

11 … I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'

10) Jesus expected his followers to do likewise, following God's law.

a) However, Jesus' followers were to have a different motive for their giving than did the hypocrites.

11) The phrase "sound a trumpet before you" probably is not literal, but it pictures people calling attention to themselves, people who "blow their own horns."

a) They do the things Jesus is talking about because they want to be praised by others — not out of compassion or other good motives.

b) One of the most outstanding examples hypocrisy in the New Testament of course is Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5.

12) These empty acts and whatever human praise is received are the only reward the hypocrites will receive for their trouble.

13) God will reward those who are sincere in their faith and whose motives in all their good deeds is to obey and glorify him.

14) Jesus goes on to say:

Matthew 6:3-4 (ESV)

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

How do we deal with this whole idea not letting our left hand know what our right hand is doing? Is it important that we keep our giving secret?

15) Here are some comments I read on this topic:

Christians can and should apply the spirit of Jesus' teaching, even while they keep accurate financial accounts. Jesus tells us:

> Don't get proud of your generosity. You are only a steward of resources that belong to God already.
>
> Don't give for the honor bestowed on donors. Instead, give in gratitude for what God has given you.
>
> Don't count your gifts as merit points for heaven. God will reward you generously, but not on your invoice.
>
> Every time you give, count it as a reminder of your freedom from the power of money and of your trust in Jesus alone for all good things.[12]

1) Next Jesus talks about prayer in verses 5 through 15.

a) He begins with a bit more to say about the hypocrites and Gentiles.

b) He finishes with the model prayer.

Matthew 6:5–6 (ESV)

The Lord's Prayer

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.

[12] Bruce B. Barton, Matthew, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 111.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [6] 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 sees in secret will reward you.

2) I can't recall ever seeing someone just standing on a street corner praying.
3) But that being said, we are not always going into our rooms and shutting the door either.
4) We do stand (or sit) many times and pray out loud – public prayers.
    a) This obviously does present us with an opportunity to be "hypocritical."
5) Publicly leading a prayer is to express thoughts for the whole group.
    a) When done properly, will lead totally away from praying to be seen of men.
6) As he does with giving, Jesus draws attention to the motives behind actions.
7) The point really wasn't a choice between public and private prayer but between heartfelt and hypocritical prayer.

What do you think is the most important thing to remember when we are asked to present a public or corporate prayer?

8) Public prayer is to express our concerns and thanksgiving to God as a group.
9) When asked to pray in public, focus on addressing God, not on how you're coming across to others.
    a) That being said,

Is it ever appropriate to bring personal concerns, wants, or needs to God in a public prayer?

10) The answer to that might be yes sometimes – but we must be selective and not make it all about us.
    a) It should be something that the group can understand otherwise it is probably going to be a major distraction.
    b) One thing to always keep in mind is to whom we are praying.
    c) We are not trying to communicate our problems to the group – we are talking to God on behalf of the group.
    d) This may eliminate that desire to bring up personal matters.
11) To which, there is always an exception.
    a) A memorable prayer I once heard was a young man from ACU who was speaking one evening during a VBS some years back.
    b) There was a heartfelt desire in his prayer for help for him personally in delivering the message God had put on his heart to deliver that evening.
        i) There was a sincerity and trust in his words that made them memorable.
        ii) It was obvious that his communication was not to us who were sitting there, it was to God and we all were right with him in his desire.

How about preaching in our public prayers?

Prayer length, public and private – how long should they be?

12) Obviously not forever and ever and ever ……
    a) Again, we are talking to God on behalf of our audience, not trying to communicate to them.

13) Before he gets to the model prayer, Jesus brings up a couple of other things that we should note in not only public but private prayers as well.
14) In fact, I think we must learn to pray in private so that we can lead others in effective prayer in public.
    a) If we violate these principles in our private prayers we will likely do so in our public prayers as well.

Matthew 6:7–8 (ESV)

7 "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they
think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your
Father knows what you need before you ask him.

15) Two things here: Empty phrases and many words.
    a) The many words, we pretty much covered in our discussion of prayer length.

What about empty phrases? What are some examples of things we here in prayers that can be "empty phrases"?

b) "Guide guard and direct us."
c) "Strengthen and protect us."
d) How about "be with …"

Are these always empty phrases? (No) So, when do they become empty phrases?

1) So, let's look at the model prayer…

Matthew 6:9–15 (ESV)

9 Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
10 Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us this day our daily bread,
12 and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive
you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father
forgive your trespasses.

2) Since this is a model, let's talk for a moment about the parts of the model.
3) There are two sections,
    a) Acknowledging God, who He is, and His greatness
    b) And what we will call important things to ask for.