

The Kingdom Way of Life

Performance Faith

Series Overview

In this series, we're exploring several chapters in Matthew that show us what it looks like to live our lives as citizens of Jesus' kingdom.

Sermon Introduction

Shakespeare wrote that all the world's a stage. In today's world of digital media, it can feel as though we have to constantly perform because someone's always watching. Even at church. But God wants our hearts, not a performance.

Passage: Matthew 6:1-18 (NIV)

Matt. 6:1 "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matt. 6:2 "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 honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Matt. 6:3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matt. 6:4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matt. 6:5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Matt. 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matt. 6:7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Matt. 6:8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Matt. 6:9 “This, then, is how you should pray:

“ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Matt. 6:10 your kingdom come,
 your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Matt. 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Matt. 6:12 Forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matt. 6:13 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from the evil one.’

Matt. 6:14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Matt. 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matt. 6:16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received

their reward in full.

Matt. 6:17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,

Matt. 6:18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

1. Read the passage. Was there anything that surprised you? Was there anything you found confusing?
2. Three times in this passage, Jesus refers to “what is done in secret” (vv. 4, 6, 18). Do you think what we do in secret matters more than what we do publicly? Why or why not?
3. Why is it dangerous to focus on your public persona rather than who you are in private?
4. According to Jesus, when you help someone or put your relationship with God on public display, you’ve received your reward “in full” (vv. 2, 5, 16). What do you think Jesus means by that?
5. What reward do we miss out on when our good deeds and our faith—our relationship with God—are for the sake of public approval and applause?

6. Compare this passage to what Jesus says in Matt. 5:16. How can Jesus say we should both act in secret and let your good deeds “shine before men”?
7. Do you think your public persona has outpaced your private worship? What changes could you make this week to give God more of your heart?

Prayer

Often a position of submission helps us physically connect with the spiritual reality that occurs. A posture of kneeling with open hands can demonstrate our willingness to submit to God's power.

Heavenly Father, thank you that my relationship with you isn't based on my ability to perform. Forgive me for those times when I'm more concerned with what other people think of me than being close to you. Jesus, thank you that through your death and resurrection I can have full confidence that I'm loved and accepted. Rather than living for others' approval and applause, let my life demonstrate the freedom and acceptance that are found only in you.