

Matthew 6.1-4 - "The Hiddenness of Righteousness"

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The three dominate religious obligations for the Jewish faith/piety were the giving of alms, prayer, and fasting. Jesus spent most of chapter 5 dealing with our inward righteousness, shifting at v.31 to look at some practical and immediate ways to put our righteousness into practice, and then again in v.43, where we are faced with the living out of our righteousness in the world as the adopted children of the Most High God. Martyn Lloyd-Jones calls this, "...one of the most uncomfortable chapters to read in the entire scriptures". Why?

In v.1 we are immediately faced with a paradox. Back in 5.14-16 He told us that we *are* (present tense) the light of the world. And now He is telling us to *hide* our righteousness. How can those two ideas even *exist together*?

We must first see that He is telling us to **beware** - this is a warning sign rather than just a stop sign. We must be fully **aware** of our hearts and of His present influence in our lives, and a good way to see that here is to ask the Q: *Are we seeking to be noticed and in turn honored by a) those around us or b) God?* It's a hard and even haunting question. We should start to see that there is a root of sin at work here, for we are still faced with sin's subtle influence in *even our righteousness*.

There are two potential and immediate pitfalls to be aware of here: **1)** we seek others around us (both those watching and even those receiving) to acknowledge that our acts are indeed good and worthy of praise and **2)** we end up taking up works based on the perceived reaction of others.

These are done ignoring the voice and prompting of the Holy Spirit, both in His leading *and* in His approval. Here we run another danger - our desire to be honored before men can lead to us taking on the most "openly seen" acts rather than the God-led ones. We then sin, not only against the command of God (Ps. 143.8; Hab. 2.1; Jn 14.10-17; 1 Cor 15.57-58; Eph 2.8-10, 6.7-8) but even against those in need.

How do we not do this? It seems impossible, another paradox. WE are supposed to both give to the poor, but do it in a way that is completely ignorant of how and what we are giving. That too seems to have quite a few pitfalls. We are still talking about a greater righteousness right (5.20)? And there lies the key to our troubles.

"Applauded [honored in NASB] here translates the same verb (doxazo) which was used in 5.16 for people 'giving glory' to God as a result of the disciples good living; the repetition of the verb but now with the almsgiver, not God, as the object speaks eloquently of the different perspectives in the two passages." - RT France

WE so desperately desire honor we will take it from anyone. Our friends, our neighbors, even our enemies. And in seeking this honor, we must take it from somewhere, we must redirect it, realign it, reshape it into something small and feeble, a shadow of its former glory. Failing that, we will take it from Him. We will hide every good thing He has ever done on our behalf and claim it as our own. We do this unconvinced of the reward He promises in return for our *transparency* in righteousness. And He knows it (Ps. 90.8; 139; Deut 29.29). Lloyd-Jones writes, *"The ultimate choice is always the choice between pleasing self and pleasing God"*. We must **choose** to redirect and realign and reshape any and all praise to the One who made us whole. WE seek to do this because we cannot bear the weight of being our own god (5.36 & 6.27), and every chance that anyone has ever had to be their own god has ended in utter failure. **To what end?**