

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 45 Sunday 11 November_2018.

Marks of a human: PUBLIC PERFORMANCE and PRIVATE or INNER LIFE:

Some weeks ago, we returned to JESUS talking to his Disciples – his Followers about: -

Supreme blessedness: Matthew 5: 1. Jesus climbed the mountain, separated himself from the crowds and gave his attention to teaching his followers – disciples. He spoke about what it really meant to follow him and please him by the way we live our lives in community and in the world.

Text Matthew 6: 1-8 and 16 - 23. READ.

(PP2) Without a doubt this condition or experience of blessedness (human happiness or well-being – which is coveted by others) is not simply achieved through aspiration and effort. God's grace is needed – to enter and experience this depth of blessedness.

Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully. (v6)

JESUS in his teaching is surely correcting many of the false understandings that have arisen in many cultures and over many generations about the God and Human relationship. Hence his use of the phrase: ***You have heard it said BUT I say to you... (5:21)*** Religious systems and philosophies (like the Jewish Mosaic Law) because of human nature become corrupted over a period of time – there is a constant need to go back to discovering what is really pleasing to God to keep what is pure – so that we might move forward as people.

Call of JESUS: to live prophetically. Jesus is describing a way of being and living in community – in relationship. Matthew 6: 8 “Do not be like them”. Be different from the Pagans but also the Scribes and the Pharisees.

5: 13, 14 Jesus calls upon his followers to be like SALT for the human race and LIGHT for the whole world. Something that should make us aware of our weakness and cry out for grace and help from God. Jesus calls his followers to prophetically – speak the truth about God and people and live the truth in the way we conduct our relationships.

(PP3) Matthew 6: 22, 23 (Luke 11: 34 – 36). Jesus starts talking about eyes, light for the body and darkness. *Matthew and Luke* record this in the middle of Jesus' teaching about how we, his followers are to live. **This is a call to have a different vision and focus** than the strictly Religious or the strictly Materialistic. (Caricatures of the Pharisees and the Pagans).

In this section Jesus is concerned I think about **MOTIVE** – WHY we do what we do. He does not want his followers to **PERFORM** our religious responsibilities for **public REWARD** and to be thought of highly by others. He does not want us to value too much being applauded by others for doing what is right and of true value in itself.

Why do we do what we do? Though we may not do it as a performance and to be seen – we may do certain things because of some need within ourselves. For example some of us “**need to be needed**” and gain much of our reward from doing (rather than in being). Jesus is concerned about motive and so he speaks about hypocrisy – he is concerned that his followers are not hypocrites (he has in mind here the Pharisees). In Matthews gospel the Greek work HUPOKRITAI is used 15 times and here in our reading Jesus warns of hypocrisy in 3 areas. He tells his disciples not to do our religious actions of: giving to the needy (charity), prayer and fasting to be seen in public places of worship or in the streets among the people.

This is not to be a performance: the word HYPOCRIT was used for Greek actors who performed with a mask on so that their true identity was concealed.

JESUS wants us to focus on the INNER BEING and discreet acts of giving to the needy. Of course, we will give to the needy, of course we will pray and fast if we follow him – but it is not a performance or for an earthly reward. The private spiritual; life “in the secret place” where God is the only one who sees (6:6) With this sort of inner life come “rewards” from the Father God – there is an inheritance which is durable and long lasting. This is not speaking I think about a system of MERITS which some Catholics have argued for but a banking of character traits and relationship with God that is a spiritual treasure chest which can be drawn on in this life.

“The eye is the light of the body” – Jesus uses a physical/ material illustration to make a deep spiritual point here. In context Jesus is NOT DISPUTING THE NEED FOR A LIFE OF WITNESS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE...BUT HE IS STRESSING THE NEED FOR AN INNER SPIRITUAL LIFE AND A PARTICULAR WAY OF VIEWING THE WORLD. The world as we view it will inform our inner life but it is our inner life with God that is to govern our behaviour and actions. It is not a performance - it is a way of living in response to God’s love and shaping of us in our inner lives of prayer. How we live in PUBLIC is a response to what we know of God and what we have learned about ourselves from God.

JESUS is concerned about AUTHENTIC living and not performance.

SPIRITUAL QUESTION: Are we sighted or blind in how we view the world and ourselves?

Light and sight enable us to do many things that darkness and blindness restrict us in. **Jesus uses the “eye” here almost as he uses the term “heart”- for that which we focus on, and that which informs us.** Jesus is calling us to keep our eyes on him – not on an audience watching us. Paul argued that as we ran the race of life, we are to keep our eyes on Jesus – the author and perfecter of our faith. Like a homing pigeon we are to have one focus.

We are not to perform as though we were a Greek actor in a mask for people in religious buildings or on street corners.

Verse 21 “*For your heart will always be where your riches are*”. (Eye = heart). What do you really value and seek after?

The desire to please God gives us focus, direction and even energy. If we simply want to please other people e.g. family or friends by performing for them then this is superficial and that’s all the reward, we will get – their smiles and applause.

Physical vision is wonderful but spiritual vision is more important than even this. What do we value? Jesus goes on to talk about material possessions and wealth. Longing for this only leads to a greater darkness of materialism. Mammon is a false god.

A vision for what God values (faith to see and live) gives us something to value now and lasts longer than a simply material vision.

There is a sense in which we live out our lives watched by others – in public view wherever we live and in places of worship and on street corners. But we are not to be hypocrites – Greek actors wearing masks playing a part as regards: giving, praying and fasting. These are to be nurtured in the private/ inner world. Our inner life is to feed and nurture our public witness. In this sense we are *to be different* (v8) especially as we pray the Lord’s Prayer. (Think about in what ways Jesus may be asking you to be different). We are to treasure and value “heavenly rewards” rather than earthly ones. Let us value the inner life and the longer view of spiritual wealth. Our “eye” focus needs to be not simply on this world and pleasing an audience.