

Sunday School
April 19, 2020

-Read: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

-Questions to consider and discuss:

- **Q:** Have you ever witnessed a politician or millionaire make a big, public donation somewhere (complete with oversized check)? How does it make you feel to witness that?
 - It feels awesome to be able to give out of what we have been given by God, whether it's giving gifts, making donations, or giving a tithe or offering to God. However, those gifts should be between you, God, and sometimes the recipient (sometimes you can give anonymously!).
 - The word "hypocrite" originally referred to Greek actors who wore different masks to play multiple roles/parts (hence the modern definition of "hypocrite," a person whose stated beliefs and actions don't line up). There are different forms of hypocrisy, but the one Jesus talks about here is doing the right things for the wrong reasons (the outward appearance of piety for selfish inward reasons).
- Verses 5-6 talk about prayer. Jesus goes on to exemplify what prayer should look like (what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer), but we'll take a look at that next week).
 - Jesus doesn't condemn all public prayer; he himself prays publicly from time to time, such as in the miracles of the feeding of the 5,000 and of the 4,000. Internal motivation is the real concern here, as we should not pray *in order* to be seen.
 - It is good to make a habit of praying in solitude and in groups that are away from public view. This allows us to focus more exclusively on God. We see examples of this in Daniel (who prayed in his room, though with the windows open), Jesus' disciples (who numerous times prayed in upper rooms), and also in Jesus, who frequently went to isolated places to pray.
- Verses 16-18 talk about fasting, a practice that some might not be very familiar with.
 - To fast is to abstain from food or drink for a period of time, in order to devote oneself to God. (Fun fact: the reason the first meal of the day is called "breakfast" is because that is the meal in which you *break* your *fast* once it's over). Fasting is a religious practice that helps one rely on God, rather than on food or other sustenance. It is not meant to be used for weight loss purposes, but instead for more times of focused prayer.
 - Fasting is not something a lot of us do with any kind of regularity. It is definitely worth attempting, though! Start with a 1-day fast, and eventually you might be able to work yourself up to a 3-day fast (make sure to still drink water, and also look up some articles and resources about different modifications you can make for fasting, as well as what the best and safest practices are).
 - It's easy to want to make it known to others how hungry you are, or how you're making some kind of tremendous sacrifice. But Jesus says to go about your business and make yourself look healthy.
 - Another thing you could try, especially given our world's current state of affairs, is a media fast, where you take one or multiple kinds of media (TV, streaming, social media, videogames, etc.) and devote some time away from them.

- For an awesome Bible reading on the heart behind fasting and serving God, read Isaiah 58:1-14.
- What kind of a reward do you want for the things that you do? Do you want the approval of humans (which is ultimately fleeting and not all that fulfilling), or do you want God's approval?
 - Caveat: we can't earn salvation through pious acts such as giving, praying, and fasting. Rather, we should be motivated to devote ourselves to these acts *because of* what Jesus has done for us.
 - Remember, your heavenly Father sees the things that you do in secret, both the bad *and* the good. Keep your eyes on the real prize, which is Jesus.
- What is one takeaway from this teaching from the Sermon on the Mount that you can apply this week?