

## MONDAY 09 May 2022 "Rewards?" (Matt. 6:1-4)

Good Monday morning to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

*Charity is a big deal in our world, isn't it?* Currently the needs of the Ukrainian people, both those who are still in the Ukraine and the refugees who have escaped with their lives, is but one of many, many significant needs in our world. Probably in your town there are homeless folks, and people living in poverty. So, here's my question... *When it comes to helping people in great need, how do you respond to the contrast between the person who gives and boasts about their generosity, and the person who gives but you never hear them say anything about it?*

These days we, along with the disciple Matthew, are looking closely at the words Jesus spoke to a large crowd of people toward the beginning of His earthly ministry. As Matthew reflected on Jesus' words from the perspective of sometime AFTER Easter weekend, and Jesus' great personal sacrifice for us, I think Jesus' words took on much greater significance. Today let's consider these words that Jesus spoke that day: ***"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. 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. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*** (Matt 6:1-4)

Wow, that's quite clear isn't it my friends? Then as now, there were many people who loved the attention and accolades of others. One of the great values within the Jewish culture, which God had outlined for His people way back to the days of Moses, was that they be a generous people, watching out for and responding to those in need, *particularly the poor, the widows and the orphans.* (Deut. 10:18)

There were no government provided social welfare or benefit programs, and therefore the Jews who sought to live God honoring lives, took seriously caring for the needy. But some, then, as now, saw this as a wonderful opportunity to be recognized and applauded by the public, so they sometimes made a spectacle of their charity. *Not only was that demeaning to the disadvantaged people they helped, but it was a mockery of God who had provided them with the resources HE wanted them to share with the needy.* Therefore, these words of Jesus were, I'm sure, well received by almost everyone who were frankly sick of the arrogance too often seen in charitable giving.

I wonder what key issues you see in these words of Jesus and what do you imagine it meant to those who heard Jesus that day? First, notice that twice Jesus used the phrase ***"your Father."***

One of the main themes of Jesus' teaching was this idea that we human beings can actually have a relationship with Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, *that could be seen as a family relationship... Father and child!* That was one reason God put such an emphasis on the family with His people, the Hebrews who came out of slavery. *Family is a God designed miracle.* Husband and wife living in a love covenant relationship with each other & with God, in which the two become one, for a lifetime. We discussed that the other day as Jesus spoke of it in Matthew 5:31,32.

Of course, the 'family' takes on much greater significance when a married couple are blessed with children, either by biological reproduction or adoption. *By God's design that child is loved deeply and protected and provided for, but also that child grows up learning from their parents all that is needed for living a God honoring life and eventually building a God honoring family with their spouse and children.* Deuteronomy 6:5-9 is one of many great explanations from God about the importance of a God honoring family in raising up the next generation.

Jesus was the first person to speak of the Almighty God as **"Father"** to His people. It was a radical concept! *That we, sinful human beings, could actually be drawn into a Father-son, Father-daughter love relationship with Holy GOD?!* Can you imagine friends what that sounded like to orphans or widows or single adults never married, or those who had been wounded in a dysfunctional human family relationship? In the past people had been taught God was the great Creator of all things and the laws given them through Moses made it clear God is a HOLY God, so naturally people lived in deep awe and respect of God, even fear of God. But **"Father"!**? Really? Yes, friends, really! And this was a major part of Jesus' life message... *that His heavenly Father, Almighty God, can be our heavenly Father, as we trust in Jesus' Easter accomplishment to make possible our adoption by God into HIS family!*

Remember John wrote: ***"Jesus was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God..."*** (John 1:10-12)

Did you also notice twice Jesus spoke on the hillside that day of **REWARDS from God**. What do you think of that my friends? *Do you believe God wants us to understand that He is watching all that is happening here on earth, all the time, in all places, and that one day there will be a reckoning where rewards will be distributed by God to us whom He wants to bless in response to what He has watched?* Is there a direct relationship between our life here on earth and what life will be like for us after death? Oh yes, my friends and I recommend to you a powerful little book written by Bruce Wilkinson titled: "A Life God Rewards"

In this little book Dr. Wilkinson does a masterful job of unpacking all the verses in God's Word which assure us that what Jesus was talking about here in Matthew 6:1-4 *is a powerful theme of God's truth which should make a difference in how we view and live life with purpose.* I offer you here simply a taste of the truths related to the heavenly rewards that you'll find in that little book...

1. God rewards those who SEEK Him, for Jesus said: ***"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. 6:6)
2. God rewards those who SUFFER for Him, for Jesus said: ***"Blessed are you when men hate you, when they insult you and reject you because of the Son of Man. Rejoice...because great is your reward in heaven."*** (Luke 6:22,23)
3. God will reward us according to His evaluation of what we have done with our lives, for Jesus said: ***"The Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what they have done."*** (Matt. 16:27)

As Matthew reflected on this great message Jesus had given, from the perspective of what Matthew had heard Jesus say and the miracles he had watched Jesus perform over the subsequent months, but also what Matthew had personally experienced in his relationship with Jesus, as he had been rescued from his tax collecting business and joined Jesus' traveling group of disciples, *what do you think Matthew would have thought about this matter of a Father-son relationship with God available to him, and also the idea of God having rewards in heaven for Matthew which he would receive from God his Father upon his arrival there?*

Now I invite you to personalize that question. *What do you understand intellectually and what have you experienced emotionally when considering the powerful truth of God's desire to be your heavenly Father? Is that reality for you?* Are you confidently living in that remarkable relationship with God as your heavenly Father?

*And what about the amazing hope Jesus gives us of rewards our heavenly Father is preparing for those of us who are His children, living our lives for His honor and glory?* How are you thanking Jesus for the words He spoke and the possibility of these realities that He has earned for you and me with His death and resurrection? And here's a wonderful song to help us celebrate these great truths...

**Today's Scripture is Matthew 6:1-4.**